

Adjournment Debate

only be one opposition speaker on the rest of the bill. I do not know whether that would in fact—

Some hon. Members: Louder!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I believe the minister's microphone is not active.

Mr. McCleave: Mine is. Perhaps the minister could come over to answer from my place.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The minister could move over. Perhaps he should change his portfolio.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will the House agree to allow the minister to speak from another place than his own?

An hon. Member: Let him speak from the place of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark).

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I was saying that I was delighted with the offer of the hon. member assuring us that there would be only one speaker if we deleted this particular section. It is intriguing indeed to think we might actually get that kind of agreement, because the time of the House is very precious and we often fritter it away in long drawn out debates in which people simply repeat themselves.

I was also pleased to have the recognition by the hon. member that subsidies like this one contained in section 272 are not in themselves necessarily good. They in fact lead to a very large expenditure by the government, with probably little benefit. They probably hurt the ports of Saint John and Halifax, for instance, in not allowing experiments with unit trains direct from the west, a variety of things which could in fact compete quite effectively with the actual cost situation but cannot compete when artificial subsidies are in place.

The hon. member tied his suggestion about the future of these rates to the future of Seaway tolls. He has indicated that I said that they would not be raised this year. I have indicated that I believe they have to be raised to reflect real costs, and I will say that again quite clearly because there too it is important in our whole approach to transportation costs that we try to understand what those costs are. We should ensure that these costs are reflected in the prices, and that we make the right decisions about the expansion of the rail system or Seaway system according to that kind of understanding of costs.

I could say to the hon. member, however, that in moving against the section 272 subsidy we are not in any way disadvantaging the ports on the Atlantic costs because it is my intention to have a further indication of the St. Lawrence Seaway tolls by January 1, to be in effect by January 1, which is a really crucial time in comparing the two seasons. It means that prior to the winter season the change will take place, and therefore the unit train operation can be planned at this stage.

● (2210)

While I want the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) to consider the very kind offer made by the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) on behalf

[Mr. Lang.]

of the opposition, I hope the hon. member will consider the possibility of going with us in quick order on the bill, and we will accept his view on how to cut expenditures and try to make progress in that way.

AIRPORTS—RUNWAY EXTENSION AT VANCOUVER—REASON FOR MINISTER'S SUPPORT OF NEW RUNWAY WITHIN DYKED PORTION OF SEA ISLAND

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, my remarks tonight concern the proposed expansion of the Vancouver international airport.

As the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) knows, back in 1973 a decision was made by the then minister of transport to go ahead with airport expansion, and after a series of exchanges in the House of Commons over a number of weeks the government finally agreed that in fact there were no environmental studies done, that in fact there ought to be some consultative process set up to decide whether and under what conditions airport expansion should take place. As a consequence the airport planning committee was established, and for the last three years it has been considering the matter of airport expansion at the Vancouver airport, and especially a new or parallel runway to the main runway which is there.

In addition environmental studies have been done, and those studies, both the airport planning studies and the environmental studies, have now been completed, but on March 12 the minister put out a press release in which he said that he viewed as a better solution a new proposal which came out during the summer of 1975 from the Ministry of Transport, for a shorter within dyke runway. The curious thing about this is that now the minister is asking the citizens of Vancouver and other interested groups to give him their views on this particular runway despite the fact that the short runway proposal has not been subjected to the airport planning process.

If the minister has any doubts about that, he can refer to the airport planning committee report of March, 1976, where it is specifically stated that the proposal which the minister mentioned in his press release is not the subject of their considerations. Furthermore, the environmental study which has just come out and which did not include a study of the proposal the minister is now advocating, said on page VI of the report that any new concepts proposed for expansion in this context, that is, in the context of short runways within the dykes at Sea Island, must conform to the federal environmental assessment and review process.

It is very curious that on March 14, 1974, the then minister of the environment, the Hon. Jack Davis, put out a press release in which he announced the federal government's new environmental impact statement procedure. The press release said things like this: "In announcing Ottawa's new environmental assessment and review process, environment minister Jack Davis said that all federal departments, agencies and firms under federal jurisdiction would have to prepare 'suitable environmental impact statements.'" Then he went on to describe the process which he at that time said would be mandatory so far as the regulatory aspect of environmental considerations of the federal government were concerned, and that would