

*Transportation*

base their prices, which may not be to the benefit of the public.

I should like to restate my point about the importance of low transportation costs in Canada. We simply cannot afford the luxury of any waste or excessive transportation costs because we already suffer from a geographical disadvantage. I would go further and say that this is one area where even the profit derived from transportation operations should accrue to the benefit of the public in an attempt to lower transportation costs so that we may increase our ability to become more productive.

This is terribly important, Mr. Chairman. The Economic Council of Canada pointed to one of the reasons we are less productive than the United States, and it is because of our higher transportation costs. It is vital that whatever we do in terms of bringing forward new legislation, that legislation should reflect our concern in the matter and be used as a means to provide the lowest possible transportation costs in Canada.

The government offers a mishmash. They have obviously recognized that they simply cannot throw the field of transportation wide open to competition. No one argues this anymore; not even the government defends that contention. So, the government imposes some regulations. I suggest that some of the regulations may be more unworkable than other aspects of competition. I regret to say this but the government has abdicated its responsibilities in taking this kind of philosophical position. It has shown its lack of willingness to govern.

Of course, Mr. Chairman, a planned system is difficult; no one will argue it is easy. It is easy for the government to wash its hands of this system and to say it will not make any decisions which caused difficulty in the past, or that it will only make partial decisions. The government can let the competitive forces which exist within the system make a lot of the decisions. Planning is not easy. It involves moving into an area with which we are not completely familiar. However, this should not deter us. Nothing great is ever easy. Nothing worth while is ever simple. New approaches have their problems. But the role of a progressive government is to face up to the problems instead of abdicating their responsibilities, and not worrying about the problems because they are too difficult.

In the field of rail abandonments, it is tough to decide that one piece of line should be abandoned and another retained. But

somebody has to make the decision. Some formula has to be worked out to recompense those who are hurt. Our competitive system cannot make these decisions; they are decisions a government must make. Admittedly, the government has included some provisions in the bill to take these considerations into account; but since that is the case why not plan things properly and look at the total picture?

I suggest that more difficulty will be created if the government only just touch upon the problem, than if they really plan things in the best interests of the people involved right off the bat. For example, the government will not have too much trouble in deciding the wages of railway workers and when they should receive a raise. They can say that the railroads are competing with each other, and if one railroad does not have enough money to raise wages they need simply raise their rates. That is very easy to do, but the national interest is involved here.

**An hon. Member:** What would you do then?

**Mr. Saltsman:** I hear someone ask me what I would do. There is an approach to a sensible policy to which essential industries will have to face up to later. We will have to find a way to cope with the problem of generating confidence between labour, management and the government; of reconciling the interests of management, labour and the population in general. Why avoid it? We must do this sooner or later so we might as well start here.

The bill shies away from this. It indicates that the government does not want this kind of responsibility. The government seem to be saying "We have had enough of it. We have not handled it too well in the past and it has given us many headaches; in the future we want no part of it". This is an abdication of responsibility from the public's point of view.

In their planning, the government will have to allocate carriers to certain groups. Which ships will go where? Where will trains best do the job? Where will a trucking company operate more efficiently? Where do you build a highway or a canal rather than a roadbed? These are tough decisions, but nevertheless decisions which in the interests of Canada have to be made. The government must accept the responsibility for making them. We have to weigh one factor against another, which is not easy to do. But the decision cannot be abdicated.