

Supply

Lang all I heard about was the Crow. For those four years the main and almost sole topic was the Crow.

Indeed, when the Hon. Member associates my way of thinking on this issue with that of the Conservatives, I would beg to put it another way. I brought this topic forward; they agreed with it.

I would like to refer to another dimension which I think is important. Before we started talking about liberalizing or deregulating air fares in the country, air fares were high. It is more than a coincidence now that we have discussed it that major carriers have come out with super seat sales for the elderly, youth and students. Were it not for the work of this House, and the Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley-Hants (Mr. Nowlan), and were it not for the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport, the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne), I doubt that the super seat sales would now be available.

It started with Otto Lang. He was the Minister of Transport who originally opened the charter rules, followed by the Conservative Minister of Transport and then the present Minister. What is important is that if we had not talked about these issues, I firmly believe we would not have the discount fares we now have, and consumers would be the losers.

[Translation]

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, just like my colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for La Prairie (Mr. Deniger) for his speech. In the course of his remarks—

[English]

The Hon. Member mentioned the present Minister, and of course I understand the realities of that reference. However, I do not want to be provocative here and I commend the Hon. Member for expressing a real interest in transport here in the House, in his own area and certainly in committee. I would like to ask him a very serious question, and it is the same as the question asked by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) in a very non-partisan way, since he was not a member of the committee.

That committee report, to which we have all referred is, as far as I am concerned is the basis for any type of reconsideration or reassessment of this question of deregulation. I would like to refer to an area which is strictly within the competence and discretion of the Minister, and ask a question of the Hon. Member. We have talked about the committee report, and we agree that something has to be done. At least there should be a formal response of some kind to that committee report. It was a unanimous report, with one disclaimer on the part of the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) who found a little disfavour with it because CPA was there. Basically the report was unanimous. There are other areas within the competence of the Minister such as gas tax, landing fees, and others.

Does the Hon. Member for La Prairie believe honestly, in his heart of hearts, that in order that the Canadian public can believe that the present Minister is serious about deregulation

so that consumers will have lower fares there must not only be reference of the Commons report, but a real downward move in taxes on fuels, landing fees, and the bureaucracy which affects the price of the tickets? Unless we see some movement within the Ministry and within the Government on these areas, we have every right to wonder whether the Minister is being political or is being practical.

Mr. Deniger: The point raised by the Hon. Member is a very serious one and one which has to be looked into as part of the total package. As he knows, the building of major capital projects, whether they be ports, harbours or airports, is based upon a cost recovery aspect. That cost recovery can only be done through the user fee for that present airport. Whether or not one agrees with it, that is the reality.

Indeed, if we want to promote domestic travel in the country, if we want to ensure that our tourism dollar remains in the country, that is a way to do it. I would not remove the airport tax on international flights, nor would I necessarily remove the gasoline tax. The gasoline tax in the Province of Quebec, and I am not familiar with the others, is much higher. The provincial tax is much higher than the federal tax. Regardless of that, the question is a serious one. I would like to see measures taken to enhance domestic travel. If the removal of airport tax is one way to do that, then I would favour it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): That is the end of the ten-minute period allowed for questions and comments. For debate, the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby).

Mr. Howard Crosby (Halifax West): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by underlining the importance of the substance of the motion presented to the House by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). His motion indicates very clearly that a sound national transportation system is essential for economic growth in Canada. I think that statement has to be the basis of this debate. We have to recognize the importance of the transportation system not only to economic growth in Canada but, indeed, to national unity. The tie that binds us throughout the breadth of this land is not simply language and culture, but the method and means of transportation across this great country. I associate the matter of transportation and the industries involved in transportation as important elements in our national process and our national unity.

One of the great features we have in Canada is our ability and capacity to travel to all parts of the nation. That is not so in all parts of the world. Recently I was on a tour of the Middle East and found that one of the things lacking in that ancient culture is an effective transportation system, notwithstanding that the peoples who inhabit that area of the world have a history which goes back over many, many centuries, and have proved their engineering capability in everything from the structures in Egypt to the old cities which exist in Babylon, Jerash in Jordan and other parts of the Middle East. They have proven their engineering capacity, yet they do not have an effective transportation system. Even a journey of 40 miles or 50 miles is fraught with difficulty.