

*Transportation Policy*

distorted by failure to apply them and apply them consistently.

In going through this exercise of reviewing what has already been done, the minister has left out a host of other things. He said nothing about the maritime provinces. He said nothing about coastal and international shipping policy. He said nothing about urban transportation. In a country like Canada, inevitably the exceptions that the minister proposes in his policy will be so extensive as to make a mockery of competition. He talks about "commercial viability" and other general principles that he outlined. If he is going to make exceptions of commercial viability and competition, he will have to make so many of them that he will either have to eliminate competition or else not make the exceptions; he cannot have it both ways.

In their briefing this morning, the government said it had examined four options in transportation—all-private, mixed public and private, public utility, nationalization. At the briefing this morning we were told that the government had opted for a mixed transportation policy, public and private. Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what we have had since 1923.

There is nothing new in the minister's statement today. The option he has chosen is the one he has been trying to live with ever since becoming Minister of Transport. There is no new direction or fundamental change in his announcement. There is no adopting of a different option. Had the minister risen in the House today and announced that the government is going to sell the CNR and Air Canada and get the hell out of transportation in a public way, I could have respected that announcement even though I would have disagreed with it 100 per cent. Instead of making one of the two choices he has, the minister makes neither choice. He is going to try to be all things to all people. No doubt he has kept the shareholders of Canadian Pacific Limited happy. In fact, if hon. members are wise they will phone their brokers right now. They should all leave the chamber and pick up 50 or 100 shares of CP Investments, because they will probably be going up within the next few days.

I am sure that the board of directors of CP Limited are breathing a sigh of relief, Mr. Speaker, for there is nothing in the minister's announcement to indicate there is going to be any fundamental change in the direction of our transportation policy. The Minister has said that the Canadian Transport Commission will be an instrument to implement government policy, which is a step in the right direction. If he feels that that is going to give him authority as minister, with the backing of the government, then he can telephone the president of CPR any morning and tell the president that he is not running this country. The minister will recognize those remarks. But in view of the fact that the minister, in his so-called transportation policy announcement today, continues to enshrine competition and "commercial viability", after he has hung up the phone the president of the CPR can still continue to act as though he is running this country. I am sure those private enterprise people are somewhat amused as well as bemused after all the threats, rhetoric and promises of the government which has now come up with this mess of a transportation policy.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

• (1630)

Let me return to my comments about passenger transportation. Where is the passenger transportation corporation that was promised last June? It is bad enough that the Quebec City-Windsor concept was dusted-off from 1968, but now we have a complete neglect or lack of words put in writing by the minister regarding a national passenger transportation corporation or a rail passenger transportation corporation. This is not even mentioned; there is not a word about it. The minister, in his announcement today, makes no recognition whatever of his duty to face up to the realities of this country in terms of energy, environment and safety. He still opts for what the government chooses to call a mixed transportation system. The minister is the one who said that transportation policy is a mess. Now he inserts himself as the wooden spoon in the recipe and stirs up that mess, which remains mixed up.

If we are going to move people in the most successful manner in terms of energy, environment and safety, we will require massive public investment and control in respect of inter-city rail passenger service, inter-urban passenger service and in-city transit. There is not a word from the minister in this regard. There is absolutely no direction. This is the same old path we have been treading since 1923. I will not be so rude as to suggest since 1885. This policy still clings to the 1890 concepts of competition. Competition is enshrined in transportation. I wish the city of Quebec, where the minister owns a home and property, would enshrine competition and commercial viability in respect of the streets, sidewalks, sewer system and power and make him pay accordingly. He would be the first to scream about competition not being relevant to the provision of essential public services under public utility, yet he tries to apply this to a national transportation policy. The ideas of competition and commercial viability have gone the way of the dinosaur except in the minds of this government.

The government says that in areas of transportation in Canada, those areas where there is real competition should pay their own way. Let me suggest to the people of the Atlantic provinces and the prairies that they are getting some more of the same, and will likely get even more. If we want the St. Lawrence Seaway to pay its own way, with progressively large increases in Seaway tolls, then the people who live far beyond either end of that system will continue to pay a disproportionate share of the cost of transportation in this country and the minister and this government will still have policies which discriminate against people and the manufacturers of products because of where they are located. The minister turns away from putting the well-being of the entire nation behind transportation. One really cannot do anything about regional disparities unless there is a transportation system which treats people fairly no matter where they live.

The minister talks about commercially viable passenger services, freight rates and freight services. If you happen to be processing seal blubber in Inuvik, there is no way you can lay it down in Toronto at a fair price. We should be discriminating in favour of people, instead of against them. It should be possible to fly from Toronto to Inuvik for the same cost as from Toronto to Regina. We should have a system of passenger fares and freight rates which