

newsletter from the Lake Erie region economic council. They start as follows:

"Lake Erie is so polluted that if anyone falls into it, he doesn't drown, he just decays".

Do you know who said that? Hon. members have heard it before. The Duke of Edinburgh is reported to have said it during an address to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France. A high school student said:

I am afraid to swim in Lake Erie because if I swallow some water I might die.

He said this during a conference on our environment. The newsletter goes on to say:

We can perhaps forgive the young enthusiast for the exaggeration. It is more difficult to forgive the inaccurate statement of the Queen's husband and the international attention it provoked.

Believe me, it did provoke international attention and the people on Lake Erie suffered from it in an economic sense, as this quote will illustrate:

Observations such as these, no matter how well meaning, do nothing toward a solution and are harmful in other ways.

Let's consider Lake Erie for a moment.

To say Lake Erie is polluted is just not true.

Sections of it are polluted and the water quality varies with location, time of year, lake levels and weather.

Sweeping generalizations create very detrimental impressions which are hard to overcome.

"Stories and statements about the pollution of Lake Erie are having a very damaging effect upon tourism along the north shore"—

The Chairman: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. It being four o'clock, it is my duty to rise, report progress and request leave to sit again at the next sitting of the House.

Progress reported.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

TRANSPORT

ATLANTIC REGION—REQUEST FOR DECLARATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY AND ENACTMENT THEREOF

Mr. Charles H. Thomas (Moncton) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should immediately declare a transportation policy for the Atlantic region based upon modern solutions to present and future problems and should introduce, in this session, legislation to implement that policy for debate and enactment by Parliament.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I present this motion to the House not just to be repetitious on a subject on which I have made many representations to the government but, rather, in the hope that somehow I may be able to inject some new emphasis into my remarks which would prod this government to action—action to honour its promise of 1966 to bring in legislation which would lead to a comprehensive transportation policy for the Atlantic area.

Atlantic Region Transport Policy

• (4:00 p.m.)

Why am I so concerned about the transportation problems of the Atlantic provinces? Why have I made so many representations to the minister, in the House, in committee, and in fact anywhere that I could get his ear? Why have I continued to call for action when it seems that all my pleas fall on deaf ears? To understand, one must be aware of the peculiar problems of the Atlantic area; one must be aware of the great important transportation plays in the economic life of Atlantic Canada; one must realize that the development of a region is directly related to its ease of access to resources and to outside markets, that a major impetus for growth comes from the ability of a region to produce goods and services demanded by the national economy and to market them in competition with other regions.

One must also realize that the ability to compete in exports is related to the efficiency with which the region is able to assemble the factors of production. This ability relates not only to adequate physical systems but to a realistic rate structure designed to overcome the handicaps created by geography. This was recognized by the Fathers of Confederation in the discussions that preceded the entrance of the Maritime provinces into the union. It was tangibly expressed by the construction of the Inter-Colonial Railway to enable the people of the Maritime provinces to secure access to the larger markets of the whole Canadian nation. Until 1912 government policy maintained a rate structure below that of the rest of the country, but between 1912 and 1920 steadily increasing freight rates, increases which were greater than those in the rest of Canada, brought on the dissatisfaction that culminated in the appointment of the Duncan commission in 1926.

The Duncan commission recognized that the Inter-Colonial rate structure had to be maintained to enable the area to compete in the markets of the country. But the commission found that successive rate increases had destroyed the historic rate structure and recommended that action be taken to assist shippers and producers in the area. The recommendations of the Duncan commission led to the passage of the Maritime Freight Rates Act in 1927 in a stated attempt to restore the former Inter-Colonial rate structure.

It may appear to some that I have dwelt too long on the background of this problem, but I have done this deliberately because of the tendency of many people to look on assistance granted for transportation in the Maritime area as assistance to the carrier rather than to the movement of products and produce of the region. I again emphasize something that I will refer to later in my remarks: assistance in respect of transportation must not be considered as assistance to the carrier but, rather, as assistance in the movement of products and produce of the region. This is the keystone of my argument. It is a fact which has been too often overlooked by governments and by those who deplore the amount of money spent on assistance in the region. I also wish to dispel the notion, too commonly put forward, that transportation is not an important factor in economic development.