

Transportation Policies

minister was not here to introduce it. The subject has not been addressed as yet by the minister. It was debated three or four days in the House, and then it disappeared from sight.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is true that I was unavoidably absent when the bill was introduced, and I was grateful to the acting minister for delivering the speech I would have delivered had I been here. However, I think it is quite unfair for the hon. member to imply that I have not taken an opportunity to speak since, because the rules of the House very clearly would only allow me to speak as the mover of the motion once all other speakers who wished to participate had done so, and it is clear—from all indications there are many hon. members opposite who are ready to filibuster that important bill—that that would be a long time from now.

Mr. McCain: That bill disappeared from sight on March 7, and the government has not seen fit to bring it to the surface since. To blame the opposition for the disappearance of that bill from public consideration is grossly unfair, and the public is asking why it happened. It conflicts with the budget, the supplementary estimates and other business of the House which, by government standards, have higher priority. As evidenced by this week's conduct of the House, the government does not know what to bring forward, and Bill C-33 could have come forward on a dozen occasions.

I wish there were time to cover the whole matter, but there is one thing which has to be clarified completely. This House has been led to believe—by statements emanating if not from the minister at least from his department—that there was a deal made between the premiers of the Atlantic area and the Department of Transport whereby in lieu of \$125 million there would be a trade-off in passenger service. At the CTC hearings in Fredericton Premier Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick said that the four Atlantic provinces did not make any agreement with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) to trade off the federal aid to rail services in order to get \$125 million in highway and airport improvements.

This morning Premier Campbell stated that no agreement had been reached between the four Atlantic premiers and the Minister of Transport. He said the offer was inadequate. He also stated that Premier Moores agreed with his remarks of that day and that they were looking for a better deal. Premier Campbell also stated this morning, "We are meeting every two weeks and getting nowhere". Negotiations which the minister referred to in the Atlantic area have not been able to make progress virtually since the day they were established because the Government of Canada, through its successive ministers of transport, has chosen to exert the force of its size upon the minute sections of Canada and has imposed upon them restrictions, regulations, and deprivations which are not in any way merited.

[Mr. McCain.]

Let us consider this \$125 million for airports and roads. The highway budget of the province of New Brunswick for 1976-77 was \$123 million. For 1977-78 the estimate is \$145.2 million. Over a three-year period the province of New Brunswick could therefore look forward to receiving 5.5 per cent of its highways budget, if it was lucky, out of the \$125 million offered by the Government of Canada.

All this is done in the name of austerity, but in spite of advice to the contrary and in spite of the need for austerity at that time, Mirabel was built. In spite of the need for austerity in the present budget year, a \$200 million skyscraper is being built in the city of Montreal. Added to that expenditure the announcement of some other project in Montreal was made, I suppose in an effort to return a member from Verdun. Austerity is an excuse when it is required, and expenditure is a political weapon to bribe the public when it is in the best interest of the government. So the minister should not throw austerity at us again, and he should not say that austerity is in any way restricting the efforts of the Department of Transport.

While we were in the Atlantic area we received complaints about our ports, those under the Harbours Board and those which are not. We also received complaints about the rates for the transportation of goods within the Atlantic area as compared with the rates in British Columbia. When wood products are transported by the same railroad in B.C. the cost is 60 per cent less than that charged in the province of New Brunswick. We were told that if there was an emergency in Bathurst, we would have to drive either to Montreal or to Toronto, or charter a private plane, because the transportation system of Canada would not provide emergency service.

We were told that air freight was inadequate, that space was not available, and that when air freight parcels were moved into the province of New Brunswick, they were moved by truck from Moncton to Saint John and to the airport, and they could be picked up two days later, with luck. As suggested by the hon. member for Villeneuve, the minister has not been getting down to the nitty-gritty of transport. He does not understand what is going on.

There is only one solution to the problem of having proper port service in Canada so that transportation can be used as an instrument of development and that is service. The Atlantic area requires \$100 million to \$150 million to be spent on its ports. Rails in Atlantic Canada require improvement, just as they do across Canada. The Conservative party believes that transportation is an instrument of development, and excuses are not adequate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please.

Mr. Whiteway: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier this afternoon during my speech the hon. member for York East (Mr. Collenette) challenged some comments I made with respect to certain comments made in the Transport Committee on Tuesday, May 31, in Saint John, New Brunswick. I told him I would undertake, as I am doing right now on