

verbal or by way of written brief, to the committee. I repeat, I look forward to seeing this bill being discussed in committee in the near future.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on Bill C-40 I do so with two distinct interests. The first is with regard to Clause 2 which appears on page one of this bill. It refers to the misnomer "user pay" which the government uses so often. I suggest it is a misnomer because the government very carefully never defines what the user is going to be expected to pay with regard to the so-called government service being supplied.

Speaking about user pay, I must recall for hon. members what happened over the last week or so. The minister sponsoring this bill chose to fly to the Hamilton area aboard Nordair, a free flight. On arrival, he explained to those in Hamilton why he felt user pay was a good concept.

I rise to speak with regard to the user pay reference in this bill, the extension of authority in that connection which the minister is asking for, and the extended authority the minister is asking for with regard to the zoning of lands involved in airport development. The reason is that we have witnessed the federal government running our airports in an unsatisfactory way. For several years they have been in a deficit position. It is time that the government be called on to state why our airports continue to lose money while those of the United States, of comparable size and activity, are making money.

In my remarks today I want to cite certain examples in the United States where local airport authorities find the operation of airports one of the most profitable things they are doing. Because of this obsession with centralization in Ottawa, our airports, especially the larger ones, are now starting to go heavily into deficit.

I suggest that local authorities be established not only for the administration of airports in an area such as Toronto, but that the local authorities be given authority over commuter transit as far as the railways are concerned and, in the case of Toronto, authority over the local harbour facilities. In short, it should be a transportation authority that the federal and provincial governments should be working towards, as opposed to this outdated concept that, frankly, is a hangover from the depression when airports were accepted as a responsibility of the federal government. I say that because the evidence is clear. This government is not competent to run a local airport efficiently. Certainly in the case of Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver that goes without question.

When we are asked to consider a bill such as C-40, we must ask some questions. Is the time not right to turn away from this centralist approach with regard to Canadian airports and accept the local transportation authority concept for the running of facilities in such urban areas such as Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver? In advancing that, and I relate it to Clause 2 which speaks about user pay, I do so because the average Canadian has no objection to paying for whatever services he feels he is using.

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However, I feel that the average Canadian takes great exception to paying for so-called costs that are needless. Frankly, that is now the case with our airports in Canada. It is not only the Post Office that is running up huge deficits, but airport activities.

● (1640)

If we go back in the history of the operation of the transportation department we find that the government at one time set up what was called a revolving fund in connection with Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver airports, a fund which was to be self-sustaining. And for a time it seemed to work. There was roughly sufficient income coming in to cover the expense of running these airports. But in the year just passed, that is, the fiscal year 1977, the expenditure in the three cities to which I have referred is expected to total \$227.6 million and the revenue amounts to \$121.5 million, leaving a deficit on the operation of airport facilities in those three cities of \$106.1 million.

Let us get it straight. When the minister, in this bill, says the user should pay, what he is saying is that users should be required to pay for such deficits as these incurred in the operation of airports in Canada. It is as simple as that. So I think it behooves every member here to ask the critical question: has the government been prudent in running this show in a manner which has resulted in a \$106 million deficit?

The deficit is broken down as follows: in Mirabel expenditures will amount to approximately \$78 million and revenues will be about \$22 million. There you have a loss of something like \$56 million in the operation of Mirabel alone. Dorval made a small profit—about \$5 million in the year to which I have referred. Toronto No. 1 at Malton, which used to make money, is now losing money to the extent of about \$22 million under the guidance of the present minister and his predecessors. Pickering, that aborted white elephant which the government intended to place northeast of Toronto, is losing \$18 million, according to the figures to which I have referred, and Vancouver shows a loss of approximately \$14 million.

In short, in each of our cities, every one is losing money. For example, Toronto is the ninth busiest airport in North America; Montreal is the tenth busiest. Is it not unbelievable that these should be the only two airports on the entire continent of comparable size which are losing money? Surely the federal government and the minister who sits here today must accept some of the responsibility for this sad state of affairs.

In Chicago, Midway and O'Hare airports, for example, handle more passengers than the entire industry in the Dominion of Canada. O'Hare handles 54 million passengers and it is making money. In fact Chicago claims that this is one of its most profitable municipal ventures. I should like to point out that O'Hare is operated by a city department and is entirely a municipal responsibility. I would also point out that the Chicago airports are not funded even by the municipality. They are entirely self-supporting. This brings me to a point which hon. members should bear in mind.