

Transport Act

The whole problem along the coast of British Columbia has been different in many ways from that in any other part of Canada. I know that in years past various operators of various steamship lines in that part of Canada have objected to being brought under any form of public regulation or control. I have always been rather at a loss to understand their reasoning in this situation, because it seems to me that in the field of transportation, where quite high capital commitments are involved in the establishment of adequate services, those who proceed to make that kind of investment should require and be entitled to some reasonable form of protection for their investment, so that once having established a run, provided they continue to give good service in accordance with public convenience and necessity, they would be able to carry on their business on a satisfactory basis and under an arrangement which would mean that their fare structure and freight structure would have some reasonable relationship to the costs of transporting goods to the consumer which apply in various other parts of the country.

The provisions of the Transport Act in the regulation of water carriers, and the way it is set out, basically apply only to the inland waters of the great lakes and the St. Lawrence system. There is another exempting section here which makes it non-applicable to coastal transportation on the Atlantic coast, but I would like to point out to the house that on the Atlantic coast the situation is completely different, for at least two reasons. One is that because of the multiplicity of small provinces on the Atlantic coast—that is, small geographically—the federal responsibility for interprovincial traffic enters into the picture; second, the publicly owned railway in Canada, partly under the terms of union with Newfoundland but in other fields in addition to that, has accepted a responsibility for the maintenance of a reasonable pattern of coastal steamer traffic on that part of the continent.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this situation in British Columbia is peculiar and for that reason I have confined the terms of my bill purely to that situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret that I have to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. Barnett: I have one more sentence, Mr. Speaker. I thought it was a little after ten minutes past five when I was allowed to speak.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Barnett: I was going to say, in conclusion, that I have tried to present my argument for the basic purpose of the bill,
[Mr. Barnett.]

but I realize there are a good many technical complications in this field. As far as I am concerned, it is the kind of subject that could appropriately be considered by a standing committee of the house, and I would be more than happy to see this bill, after acceptance in principle on second reading, go to the appropriate standing committee of the house for detailed consideration.

Mr. Grant Deachman (Vancouver Quadra): Mr. Speaker, for the last 20 minutes I have listened with a great deal of interest indeed to the remarks of the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) because, coming from the Pacific coast and representing a Pacific coast riding, I am aware, as he is, of the great importance of the inland waterway which serves the province of British Columbia, a considerable portion of the state of Washington, and stretches northward to the southern borders of Alaska. You may start below Seattle and sail northward for 1,000 miles on an inland waterway which comes upon the open sea only once for a brief time in that whole passage.

This great waterway is full of marine traffic to the extent that you are hardly ever during the whole voyage out of sight of another vessel of some kind ploughing up and down these inland passages. Moreover, this traffic not only covers the coast line itself, but the indented fiords along the coast, running many miles inland, reaching lumber camps, pulp and paper mills, fish canneries, Indian villages, and other settlements steadily growing and increasing in importance up and down the coast of British Columbia. This is a scene of which my hon. friend is well aware, and he, like myself and other members from British Columbia, is well aware how important is the domestic traffic on these great inland waterways to the people of British Columbia and to much of its commerce.

To give the house some idea of the extent of the traffic which moves along inland waterways, I should like to refer to a supplement to the 1963 annual report of the national harbours board which contains some interesting figures on this question. Turning to the figures for the port of Vancouver, the total domestic cargo tonnage for 1959—I am eliminating foreign cargo tonnage because we are discussing in this bill inland traffic, not overseas traffic—was 4,900,000 tons, or in round figures 5 million tons. In 1963 it had increased 2 million tons to a figure of approximately 7 million tons. That is the total inward and outward domestic tonnage.

If I may compare that 7 million tons of domestic traffic with the traffic in and out of the port of Montreal, in 1959 the figure was 7,700,000 tons approximately, and by 1963