

Transport Commission of Inquiry

have ample precedent in this House for referring the subject matter of a private member's bill, without referring the bill itself, to standing committees for investigative work. I hope that out of this debate, and perhaps as a prelude to the minister's efforts within his own department, such a step could be considered. I feel strongly about this, as most members of the House are aware. I am encouraged, by contact with various sectors of the transport industry, in my belief that any attempt by the minister to bring forward such a bill designed to achieve the desired aim and principle, will receive nothing but the widest possible support, as it certainly will from this side of the House.

I think the government does recognize its fallibility in areas such as this, as I think any government would. Again I am encouraged by the minister's comments in the House the other day in response to questions I raised. At the time I felt I should ask a supplementary question in connection with an accident involving a DC-8 at the Halifax International Airport, specifically dealing with whether the minister did not then feel it was time to move in this direction. The minister was kind enough to reply, and I quote from page 1227 of *Hansard* from April 8, 1974:

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke in the House a few weeks ago I think I mentioned that I would favour an independent board in such cases, and that whenever a new policy was introduced this would be part of it.

What I am concerned with today is the word "when". I am concerned with the delay in getting on with what the minister indicates will hopefully be a series of reforms including this one, but we do not know when that will be. We may have an intervening general election, in which case there would be no delay whatsoever. You will have it in front of you very shortly under the order of government bills along with, I am sure, a virtually parallel list of reforms in the ministry of transport.

All that I really seek to do here, through the medium of a private member's bill such as this, is to transfer the professional and technical expertise from the responsibility of the ministry of transport to another body so that as time passes there can be no question of conflict. I would ask of this commission that it report to the House through some other minister, perhaps the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang), but that is unimportant, and that it do so in order that the Canadian travelling community using various transportation modes will know there cannot be any possibility of repetition of the examples we have seen. I will not repeat them as they are a matter of *Hansard* record. Rather I would cite only one, and that I refer to briefly, being the situation in which we have seen individuals enter the service of government in the ministry of transport, maturing and advancing in that service, winding up heading different sections of the same branch. In this situation, we would have one responsible for regulation and one responsible for investigation.

We have in front of us, now still unresolved, a situation in which we caused two highly professional and competent men who have known one another for all their lives to be pitted against each other and in conflict. This resulted from permitting a situation to happen in which it is very clear that in part the regulatory authority failed to do something that the investigative authority had to uncover. Honourable men would do this and I am not suggesting

[Mr. Forrestall.]

that the honourable thing was not done. What I am suggesting is that we do not need to impose upon our public servants in this particular area of transportation accidents, regulation, investigation and so on, the burden of this type of conflict.

I note with some satisfaction that there are others in this Chamber who would like to comment on this matter. I hope the parliamentary secretary can shed some light on the intention of his department, at least in respect of the philosophy of such a move as this. I would ask hon. members if they could exhibit some agreement in respect of this matter by finding some way of referring to the Committee on Transport and Communications the subject matter, if not the bill itself. I thank the House for its understanding and patience during my remarks on this matter for probably the twenty-third time since I first introduced it.

Mr. Joseph-Philippe Guay (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I should like to commence my remarks by congratulating the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) for the continuing interest he has shown in this House and elsewhere in promoting safety in transportation. He has undoubtedly devoted a good deal of his time and energies in the preparation of this bill and as a result deserves, in my opinion, a great deal of credit. Possibly in not too long a time we will give him that credit for the dedication he has shown in promoting the idea. The hon. member also has been responsible for publicizing the inherent danger of possible conflicts of interest in accident investigation in Canada, a process which is always helpful in molding public thinking and engineering the climate of change. While the hon. member has publicly advocated a change in investigation and report procedures, the government has been quietly behind the scenes reviewing the advisability of a somewhat similar change. I will say more about that at a later stage.

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At this stage I should like to make clear that I am not an opponent of the idea embodied in this bill. I think, however, the matter has not been looked into to a sufficient degree at this time to convince me that the time is quite yet ripe to proceed with the commission of inquiry to investigate transport accidents, or indeed that the method of appointment and operation of the commission of inquiry as set out in the bill is the best one.

The idea of creating some type of accident investigating body responsible for investigating accidents in all modes of transportation coming within the jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada has been under consideration in the Department of Transport for more than a year. On instructions from the Deputy Minister of Transport, a study has been initiated within the public service to study the pros and cons of the idea of creating an independent body, and a report following the study has been submitted to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand). The study was participated in to some degree by representatives from the air, marine and railway administrations, and from the surface administration. The actual report was prepared by an official on loan from the Department of Justice. This official held a number of meetings and travelled to Wash-