

Transport Accidents

proposal. When the lives of workers are at stake, the government should understand that the workers have the right to some say in the matter. That is particularly relevant to the movement of dangerous commodities. It is fine for the minister, with Gallic candour, to continue to say that his department is in a mess, but to allow messes when the welfare of workers, passengers, communities and important freight is at stake is inexcusable. I urge the House to permit this bill to go to committee.

• (1720)

Mr. Cliff McIsaac (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) has repeated the remarks he has made on previous occasions in a general way on the need for some kind of an investigative body. I appreciate his agreement to withdraw this bill and to have its subject matter referred to the standing committee.

I notice in reading previous proceedings on similar bills that the hon. member has had a long and obviously sincere interest in the question. I am sure he is aware that since the bill was introduced in April, 1974, in the throne speech of last September the government made a commitment to implement the concept we are discussing today. The idea of an independent accident investigation board, authority or agency of some sort—I think the word “board” is the best one—will be investigated and eventually such a board will be established. I say “investigated and eventually established” because there is a degree of conflict in existing regulations, provincial and federal. There is the Criminal Code, and the provinces have legislation dealing with motor vehicle accidents, and so on. Some drafting and jurisdictional problems will have to be taken into account in implementing this concept. That is part of the reason that I ask the hon. member to withdraw his bill, because there are two or three clauses in it which might conflict, not with the general direction but with some specific provisions already in existence.

The bill and its clauses could best be discussed in committee. Work is continuing in this department and others, and I believe a memorandum is being prepared for the minister to give to cabinet. I cannot tell my hon. friend the stage it is at, but I can assure him that work is continuing

in the department to develop the kind of legislation he has been seeking.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) covered many of the broader questions of safety in rail operations. While they are appropriate, this bill primarily deals with the question of whether there shall be some kind of over-all investigative body. I am sure the hon. member supports that principle, having indicated his concern for greater safety on the railways and other modes of transportation. I certainly agree, and the government agrees, that Bill C-226 should be withdrawn and its subject matter referred to the standing committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. members have heard the request of the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) and the comments of other hon. members. Is it agreed that Bill C-226 be withdrawn and that the order be discharged?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Order discharged and motion withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it also agreed that notice of motion No. 17, also in the name of the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East, be withdrawn from the order paper?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Order discharged and motion withdrawn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: By unanimous consent, it has been moved by the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East, seconded by the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. McIsaac), that the subject matter of Bill C-226 be referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Six o'clock.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the House agree to call it six o'clock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do now leave the chair until two o'clock p.m. tomorrow.

At 5.28 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.