

having accepted huge land grants and other advantages, then, of course, we will be extremely critical of it and fight it at every turn.

So the fact that this bill awards assistance to truckers is a step in the right direction. As the minister said, they have to have roads to operate on. It seems to me that this is a limiting factor. The trucking industry may be forced, because of the lack of adequate truck roads, to operate in precisely the same areas as the railroads do now. Unless accessibility to the more remote areas that need transportation assistance is increased, the alternate transportation system will not be of benefit to those areas. If the trucks are going to be controlled by the same companies that operate the railroads, competition will not bring about the expected advantages. The minister and hon. members on the other side of the house place a great deal more faith in competition than I do. Nevertheless, there are many interesting suggestions in the bill, and I hope it will not be too long in passing because it is necessary to increase transportation services in the region for the reasons I have mentioned.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-207 is to authorize freight assistance in the Atlantic region and we support this measure introduced by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson).

The only point on which I wish to direct the attention of the house is clause 2(c), and I quote:

"select territory" means the territory consisting of the Provinces of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, the Island of Newfoundland and that portion of the Province of Quebec that is south of the St. Lawrence River and east of Quebec Highway 23, being the highway connecting Lévis in Quebec with U.S. Route 201 in the State of Maine;—

Mr. Speaker, I suggest the minister could have included the whole province of Quebec in the bill authorizing freight assistance in the Atlantic region because we feel that the province of Quebec should be recognized as a designated area.

In my area, for instance, which is located north of the St. Lawrence river, we find farmers and small industries in need of help. They cannot be helped directly through subsidies; however, we could help them by means of preferential transportation rates.

Atlantic Regional Freight Assistance Act

Not so long ago, I met the president of a Saint-Hyacinthe manufacturing company which exports plastic articles. The company can do so in summer when it uses shipping facilities, for water-borne freight rates are enormously lower than those of any other means of transportation.

● (12:10 p.m.)

This manufacturer told me that in winter it was impossible for him to export to the West Indies, just because of the excessive transportation charges between Montreal and Halifax. From Halifax transportation is by sea and the cost is accessible. But from Montreal to Halifax transportation rates are prohibitive.

There is seasonal unemployment in the winter just because of the preposterous transportation rates. Now it seems to me that, in such cases, the minister should be able to grant subsidies for rail or road transport so as to enable those small Canadian industries and the province of Quebec to carry on their operations during the dead season.

There are therefore improvements to be made. I do not doubt that the minister is thinking of those cases, even if there is no mention of that in the bill, and that it will be possible for him to widen the scope of Bill C-207 so as to encourage small industries to compete and to go on doing business.

As for subsidies to truckers, they are justified because truckers today are providing better transportation than railways. This is a national business concern. That it should belong to private enterprise, I agree. Individuals must assume greater responsibilities.

We believe the minister to be right when providing in his legislation for subsidies to trucking companies, and railways as well, and for a reduction of freight rates in order to help the underdeveloped areas.

In closing, I say that the whole of the province of Quebec needs assistance in the field of transportation of goods coming from other areas of the country, so that the economic revival will reach that province which, as everybody knows, is economically less prosperous than the others, although it has whatever is required for an important development of its natural resources.

I think that all the provinces, including the Maritimes, would agree that the province of Quebec should get those subsidies, in the same capacity as the other provinces or areas which need them.