

Transportation

as they existed eight years ago. Advances in transportation facilities and equipment since that time have rendered some of its recommendations obsolete. This is exemplified by the forerunner to this bill introduced in 1964, Bill No. C-120, which was also based on the MacPherson report but was left to die on the order paper because of criticisms expressed before the transport committee. Bill No. C-231 has been introduced in its place.

The general purpose of Bill No. C-231 is to remove present transportation regulations and controls to allow more freedom to vary charges on the basis of competition. It has been proposed that there will be a 17-member commission, the Canadian Transport Commission, which will attempt to integrate rail, air, water, truck and commodity pipe line operations in order to give greater freedom to transport agencies in the setting of rates for shipments without rigid government control. It is expected that competition will eventually control the fixing of rates.

When the minister made his opening statement he sounded hopeful of early passage, but a practical and workable transportation policy cannot be evolved so easily. There is only a short time before the Christmas adjournment to discuss this bill, but I think it is important to make a start in order that the general public will at least be partially informed as to government intentions in this latest attempt to solve the country's transportation problems.

I made a recent week end trip home to discuss this bill with usually well-informed constituents and I found they had very little knowledge of how the proposed legislation would affect their particular area, and I refer particularly to southern Saskatchewan. They also had little knowledge of how it would affect the country as a whole.

● (7:20 p.m.)

The whole impact of greater rate freedom must be realized, particularly in inland areas such as southern Saskatchewan, and for that reason I hope we have a lengthy debate on this bill during our consideration of clause 1. On clause 1 we are, of course, speaking in general terms. We will be going into a more detailed consideration of the bill during the clause by clause study. I think probably all of us have some amendments which we shall move at that time. I consider that the general policy should be carefully scrutinized first as, I repeat, a means of informing the public, or perhaps I should be more forceful and say alerting the public regarding some of the proposed transportation changes.

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There will be no opposition to the stated objective of the bill as outlined at the beginning of clause 1:

—an economic and efficient transportation system making the best use of all available modes of transportation at the lowest total cost is essential to . . . the economic . . . growth of Canada—

Just what the government considers to be the best use of all modes of transportation and what the cost will be must be our main concern. In an earlier statement the minister said:

This proposed measure provides the framework for a national transportation policy and establishes new machinery for carrying out that policy.

The words I want to emphasize in that quotation are "policy" and "new machinery". Those are the debating points for this committee, namely, the government's proposed policy and the new machinery it advocates for administering this policy. I repeat once more that these matters must be brought fully to the attention of the public before definite action is taken under the terms of the bill. What is decided in this committee and finally approved on third reading will have a large part to play in deciding the economic future of Canada. This is the reason for the necessity for slow and very careful passage of this bill.

The standing committee on transport and communications, of which I am a member, had a very busy time with this bill, as other hon. members have pointed out. The first meeting to consider Bill No. C-231 was on October 6, 1966. The committee held 33 meetings, morning, afternoon and evening in many cases. It received and studied 33 briefs and heard evidence from 73 witnesses. As I said before, I am speaking mainly in the interests of the area from which I come, southern Saskatchewan. Among the witnesses from this area and from the west generally were members of the National Farmers Union, the three western wheat pools, the Saskatchewan government, the Manitoba government, the Alberta government, the Manitoba Branch Lines Association, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, the Coal Operators Association, and opposition members of the Saskatchewan legislature. There were others, of course, but I just mention those in passing.

Mr. Pickersgill: And the leader of the Liberal party of Manitoba.

Mr. Pascoe: Yes, and the leader of the Liberal party for Manitoba. He presented a brief. In the briefs presented there were at least 75 recommendations for changes to the bill. I