

*Transport Act*

barges rather than by the more familiar types of coastal steamer. In recent years a further development has taken place, one which I think should not be overlooked in any consideration of the pattern of travel on the Pacific coast. I have in mind the development of a publicly owned ferry system under the aegis of the provincial government of British Columbia. I should like to point out at once that it is my understanding that the operation of this publicly owned ferry system would not be covered by the terms of the bill I am now proposing. In other words, provision for licensing by the board of transport commissioners would not apply in the case of provincially-owned vessels.

I submit that in spite of the many changes which have taken place in the field of travel and which I have attempted, briefly, to outline, there is a continuing need for some form of orderly regulation of transportation by water on the west coast. I should like to point out that water transportation on the west coast of Canada is almost the only aspect of public transportation, as far as I know, in this country which is not governed by some form of public regulation and control. It is the only area of transportation where the people who use it have no right of any kind to appeal to a public body for redress if their interests have been adversely affected. There is no place where they can go to raise any question with regard to the tariffs, fares or freight rates they are charged. They have no means of ensuring whether a particular service will continue to run or cease to run. Moreover, there is no means of protection for those who operate a service so as to ensure that a dozen other people may not suddenly decide to institute a parallel service, with the result that they might all go bankrupt and, in the end, no service would be provided.

From time to time in this house I listen to considerable discussion on the subject of railway branch line abandonment proposals in certain parts of the country. As I listen to such discussions I sometimes wonder what the situation would be in the rest of Canada, and in the prairie provinces in particular, if the transport companies concerned had complete freedom to tear up railway lines or to discontinue passenger services here and freight runs there, unanswerable to any public control or authority and without regard to any of the results which might follow from such actions. Undoubtedly, of course, one of the results might be to bring about some shortening of the length of discussions that take place in this house. But I would like to point out that this is precisely the situation which has faced the people who live in the coastal area of British Columbia all through these

years. In my view, Mr. Speaker, that is why the late Mr. A. W. Neill, when he represented a constituency which does cover a very large and important part of that coast, pressed this point in the interests of the people who lived in the coastal communities.

I think this matter is perhaps becoming more important, even though there may not be as many steamer runs affected now as was the case some years ago. I feel that one of the reasons it is becoming more important arises in part out of the development of the provincially owned ferry system in British Columbia, because as matters stand the provincial government, without any other reference, can institute runs and in fact has plans at the present time, according to announcements that we have read in the press, for introducing new ferry runs such as the one that has been proposed to follow what is becoming known as the route of the Haidas, from the northern part of Vancouver island through to Prince Rupert. They can do this without any reference to the general pattern of transportation and the effects their actions may have on it. Of course, the actions of the provincial government in the field of highway development can very drastically alter the requirements as far as travel by water is concerned. In addition to that there is a great deal of confusion as to what is the present policy in the matter of subventions for the maintenance of certain runs to the more isolated areas, when they are required. Confusion exists as to what areas of responsibility in this field lie between the federal and provincial authorities. I could go into the details of particular examples, Mr. Speaker, if I wished to take the time of the house to do that.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I feel that in this situation it is perhaps more necessary than ever, at least for the matter of the protection of the existing operations and the existing lines, that they be brought under the orderly regulation that applies in other transportation fields, whether they be railways under federal jurisdiction or bus lines operating under the jurisdictions of provincial public utility commissions. If the provisions set out in my bill were adopted, it would mean that a realistic appraisal of this whole situation could be made and it would have the responsibility of being made by a public body set up by parliament, namely the board of transport commissioners. The question of subventions, where they were required, could be properly dealt with as part of the general pattern of establishing adequate transportation by water to supplement the other forms of transportation as they come into existence from time to time.