

Transportation

have on our responsibilities to the people we represent. If we turn this power over to this independent board, we should have some way of examining and controlling it without interfering with its judicial capacity or efficiency of administration. This amendment would have two main results; we would have some control over the operational side of our transportation systems and some parliamentary machinery by which positive expansionary concepts of railway development could be put forward in a proper manner through permanent parliamentary machinery. The railways have demonstrated in the last few years that you have to twist their arms, tails, and everything else before they see the future as for example, the Pine Point Railway. I hope the minister, on whom our hopes now rest, will consider the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Peace River as being well-intentioned and not designed in any way to embarrass the government. I trust he will consider it to be an improvement to the bill that would make hon. members on all sides of the house very proud of our work on this bill.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, perhaps the hon. gentleman would permit the minister to say a word or two on the last point that he raised. The amendment suggested yesterday by the hon. member for Peace River was very similar to a proposal made in the standing committee by the leader of the opposition of Manitoba; in fact, it is almost identical to that proposal. The idea of having a standing committee with some kind of trained staff that will assist them in dealing with so important a matter as the whole spectrum of transportation is certainly one that appeals very much to me.

There is a procedural question in my mind, namely, whether the right way to achieve that result is to allow the Senate and the Governor General to participate in making the rules of this house, or whether we should do it under our own standing orders. However, I am very much in favour of the objective of the hon. member for Peace River, endorsed by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Hamilton: On that point, Mr. Chairman, if I may trespass upon the time of the committee for a moment, I think the minister recognizes that our concern is that it be done under the ordinary procedures of the house. The minister did not quite give that guarantee. There is close to the surface all this suspicion that has been generated over 60 years. We have to establish a statutory provision.

[Mr. Hamilton.]

Then, this matter would be written into the statute. It would not seriously affect the house rules, but it would impress upon the people who think we are going blind into this new era and turning powers over to a super-board, that we are guaranteeing by statute that this body will not get out of complete touch with parliament. That is the whole point of the amendment; we want a guarantee in this respect.

Mr. Saltsman: Mr. Chairman, I have only a few brief remarks to make at this time. Before raising the serious objection that I have to the principle of the bill, I should like to take this opportunity of thanking the Minister of Transport for the assistance he and his department have given to the Waterloo-Wellington Airport Commission in the extension of the airport runways. The minister appeared recently in the riding to inaugurate the runway extensions. This has been a great help to us, and we appreciate the efforts of the minister's department in looking into the problems involved.

The difficulty this bill raises is the question of whether the best interests of Canadian transportation can be served by competition in the field, or whether there is a need for an over-all, comprehensive body that will direct the use of transportation in this country and integrate our resources in the best way possible.

I think the question that has to be asked is not which is the best ideology, but which works best and which will result in the best service at the lowest cost to this country. Canada starts off with the disadvantage that we have higher transportation costs than other nations. Because of the vast distances that have to be covered in our thinly populated country, our transportation costs tend to be high. Every effort must be made to lower those costs if we are to raise our productivity. We certainly cannot afford to have any wasteful efforts in the field of transportation, whether those wasteful efforts be under the direction of the government or private companies.

This bill is somewhat schizophrenic: it says we are going to have competition, but at the same time we are going to lay an extremely heavy hand on that competition and see that it does not get out of control. I think we will wind up getting the worst of both worlds. We will not benefit from the advantages possible under a competitive system in those areas where competition will work effectively; neither will we get the benefits of a regulated