

*Transportation*

In the bill as it is now a new principle has been brought in which turns the powers of the elected representatives over to a delegated board which is to carry out these rationalization provisions. On behalf of our party I stated on second reading and in committee that we reluctantly accepted this principle in an effort to try to achieve the efficiency in the management of our transportation system that a modern economy required.

In our amendments we tried to do two things under the general principles about which I am talking. On the one hand we tried to strengthen the hand of the board in order that it could better do its job. Simultaneously we tried to keep in the hands of the elected representatives—in other words in parliament, the House of Commons and the Senate—a little more control over this board to which we delegated such vast powers.

The caveat I want to register, Mr. Speaker, is that I still feel it would not have done any harm and would have strengthened the bill considerably had we given that board the power to direct as well as to recommend. In view of the pressure of the subsidies, we could have given to that board considerable authority to express to railway management that where there were ways to run the railways better and save money and thereby keep tariffs down, and perhaps the board could have got its way more effectively with the railways had it been given power to direct. We lost that amendment, Mr. Speaker, but we make no apologies for having made the try.

Simultaneously with trying to strengthen the power of the board to do its job properly the hon. member for Peace River also moved an amendment to set up a more sophisticated means by which parliament could control one of its agencies, whether it be a crown corporation or a board. This proposal too was voted down in committee. I think that was a mistake, and I hope it does not turn out to be fatal. I know that in theory the standing committee on transportation has the right to examine the workings of this board. I also know that because of the lack of skilled professional help at the command of the standing committee there is not a great deal that laymen can do.

● (12 noon)

For two or three years after passage of this bill, because of the interest aroused in its preparation over the last few years, a number of members will take an active interest in this

matter and maintain their knowledge. Ultimately, from apathy, from human nature, the interest will drop, and I am afraid the board will have tremendous powers without full and proper control by parliament. Nobody will be interested enough to look at it, to exercise the control that is needed.

If a government wants to play games it is possible, under the rules of the house, to delay the setting up of a committee until far into the session. At that time other things occupy hon. members and little may be done. We should prefer that a standing committee be set up in such a way that the government could not interfere with the way the board is brought under review. We should like to have that committee under the chairmanship of an opposition member. We started that principle in the public accounts committee some eight years ago and it has worked very well. I think it would work just as well here.

Third, we should like to see that committee buttressed by at least three highly qualified individuals able to deal with technical matters that the ordinary layman member of the house cannot deal with, in order that the chairman of the committee and the committee may be aware of what is happening on the board. It is in this area that trouble will arise. The interest of the House of Commons will not be maintained, and as a result I can see the board becoming a power unto itself. There will be no machinery or capacity to check and control it, unless there is a serious uproar here, in the house.

All this was dealt with in committee. I do not have to rehash it. I have made my point. This party is concerned about our handing over tremendous powers to this board without there being more sophisticated means to strengthen our committee to control that body.

Another point I want to raise in summary has to do with the Crowsnest pass rates. This matter is always dealt with emotionally because for over half a century thousands of Canadians have depended on this rate structure to operate their industries and make a living. It has not been repeated often enough in this debate that at the beginning a contract was made. That contract has been modified over the years, but its essence was that if a group of men built a railway, certain things would be done. The railway, the Canadian Pacific, received tremendous land acreages, valuable oil and mineral rights, forest lands,