

what do we have to say about such things as changes in freight rates, changes in air fares or the elimination of services? Such decisions are made by the Board of Transport Commissioners. If this board, in certain instances, should make recommendations to the executive I believe we should know on what basis those recommendations are made. As the last speaker said, it is not good enough to have justice done. The public has a right to know it is being done and what the weighing process is. They want to know what tipped the scales in favour of this or that decision. As I said, it is not just our privilege to dig into these matters but our right. We intend to do this. I have no hesitation in supporting this particular amendment, and I would add what small voice I have to that of the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner).

**Mr. John Burton (Regina East):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me the amendment moved by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) in respect of Clause 24 is a perfectly reasonable amendment. I intend to support the amendment and urge the government to go along with this change in the legislation. It may be a relatively small point in terms of the over-all framework of the bill, but nevertheless we think it involves some important questions. From the debate which has taken place on this bill, in the House, in the committee and now at the report stage, it is perfectly obvious that we are dealing with a very sensitive area of the Canadian economy. As legislators we are faced with a conflict of interest involving our need to promote export trade on the one hand, and the needs of the Canadian economy on the other hand. In addition, we must consider the needs of the 200,000 or so people who are dependent upon this industry for a livelihood. We do have a conflict of interest to resolve which poses some very difficult problems for the government, and which will pose very difficult problems for the board.

As has been noted, clause 24 gives the minister powers in respect of the publication of the report. A discretionary power is given to the minister to publish a report which may be abridged, as is considered necessary, to delete any confidential material. In respect of the proviso which is now contained in clause 24, which protects any information the minister may consider to be confidential, I believe it would be in the public interest, or in the interest of all concerned with this legislation, to ensure that there shall be reports and that the publication of the reports in whatever form shall be mandatory. I suggest this would assist the government in carrying through the principle of this bill, and in fact would lend itself to a greater degree of public confidence in the bill and in the operations of the board. Therefore, I would urge the minister to seriously consider this amendment and go along with other parties in approving it, thus improving the bill.

**Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate those who took part in this short debate for the high quality of their intervention. I do not know how the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) spent his weekend, but his

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contribution was a great improvement over his performance of last Thursday. I say that with a smile and I know he can take it in a similar way.

It is difficult for me to answer the points raised because one is uneasy when he finds himself in the position of appearing to be against providing information to educate the public. If I am still in that position, it is after reflection, and I hope my argument will be accepted by my hon. friends.

First of all, may I repeat what I said on a number of occasions before the committee. It is the intention to publish all reports made under clauses 16 and 17 as soon as it will be possible to do so. It is the intention to publish them whenever it is possible to do so. There might be cases in which it would not be wise to do so. Let me give a couple of examples.

There might be situations, for example, in which the reports have been overtaken by events. This could very well happen. A report could be brought in and then events could develop which would make the report unnecessary. In this case, there would seem to be no purpose to be achieved in publishing the said report. Another example might be a situation in which there would be so much confidentiality in the report that, without the confidential material, it would be of little assistance. I might comfort my western friends on this point by saying that a similar situation occurs in respect of the National Energy Board which deals with a good western commodity, as we all know.

In any event this is my first line of defence for the position I take, which is one of opposition to the amendment. I have another point to make. The change suggested by the amendment from "may" to "shall" would not change anything unless a specific number of days were attached to the word "shall". If we were to say that the minister shall publish the report this would leave me as free not to publish it as if we said "the minister may". The change in words does not change anything in reality.

The only way to achieve a real change would be to say the minister shall publish the report in 190 days, 180 days or 90 days, which is a favoured period of my hon. friend from Edmonton West. If the suggestion should be that a specific number of days be indicated, then I would say that cannot be done for a number of reasons. Two situations might be created. The board might recommend to the government protection or non-protection. If the government should recommend non-protection, that non-protection may be given or may not be given by means of a decrease in the tariff. As Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce I would want to bargain this concession with our trading partners. If the other countries with which I am trying to bargain know there is a recommendation to that effect from the textile and clothing board, I am not in a particularly good bargaining position.

If it should be the other way around, and the board should recommend protection for a period of time and of a certain type, then if this were known to foreign exporters and to Canadian importers, they might try their best to swamp the market fast enough to avoid