

*Transportation*

from reading subsection 2 of new section 335 which provides:

Subsection (1) shall be in force during the two years after the coming into force of subsection (1) and expires at the end of that period.

The only question in my mind is what happens after that two-year period? What happens after the study is completed? I wonder whether the government, after receiving the independent report by the Acres Company and another company which will take two years to prepare, will be able to give any guarantees? Is there any guarantee in this present bill, which says that parliament can then look at this matter, or will it mean that after the report is brought in the government of the day can then bring forward a policy which will be discriminatory and detrimental to the Atlantic provinces regardless of the Maritime Freight Rates Act? That bothers me.

After this bill is studied, brought back to the house and then becomes law, will it mean that the government of the day can go ahead and do that when the two years have expired? The bill does not say anything about the study. We know why the two-year freeze has been put on. Can the government then go ahead and decide to make all rates, including those in the maritime Atlantic provinces, compensatory? I suggest there should be some guarantee in the legislation that this will not be the case and that all interested parties, including members of parliament, will have an opportunity of being heard on the subject, perhaps by the matter being referred back to parliament, before any regulations or orders are put forward.

The matter was dealt with briefly in a recent editorial in the *Saint John Telegraph-Journal* of August 31 which had this to say:

A national transport regulatory agency can be a good thing—if it doesn't set up a stifling red-tape bureaucracy.

The editorial then refers to the Maritime Freight Rates Act and then continues:

In the simplest terms, the Maritime Freight Rates Act was intended to let this region's manufacturers compete at less transportation disadvantage in the Quebec and Ontario markets. It never produced the expected benefits entirely, and in recent years across-the-board freight rate increases have watered down its effect even further; nor has this area benefited from the intense rail-highway competition that has kept hauling costs down in more industrialized areas.

It then says:

But the new bill at least sets out to maintain such M.F.R.A. benefits as exist and a two-year freeze on maximum freight rates in the Atlantic

[Mr. MacEwan.]

region is apparently designed to postpone final decision until the current regional transportation study . . . is completed.

It goes on to say:

A national transportation policy based solely on "compensatory" freight rates (i.e., keeping only profitable lines operating) could do immense harm to the maritimes. So far, Ottawa seems to be keeping this in mind. It will be up to the Atlantic provinces to be sure their interests are protected as parliament legislates in this crucial field.

I would hope that, as has been stated in other legislation, more than a moral guarantee will be given to the Atlantic provinces. We would like something in writing, in black and white, rather than an oral agreement because, as suggested by an hon. member from Toronto, who quoted the late Silby Barrett, "an oral agreement is not worth the paper it is written on." There should be a change in the bill. I hope the Minister of Transport will consider this.

May I suggest with regard to this legislation that, even after the present study is made of the transport problems of the Atlantic provinces, a question similar to that which I asked one of the officials in committee, with respect to the Maritime Transportation Commission be kept in mind. At that time Bill C-120 was before us and I asked the official of the M.T.C. if he would like to view it, and at the same time to understand just what had occurred in the country, before making his final submission so far as the Atlantic provinces were concerned.

• (5:50 p.m.)

I think this bill, or whatever is finally brought forward, should be the subject of a full study by those who come from Atlantic provinces so that they may be able to find out how their region is affected before any final legislation is enacted for our area. I heard the minister say that all interested parties will have an opportunity to express their views. I take it this will include the Maritime Transportation Commission and other organizations of that nature. As I say, I hope to have the opportunity to sit on the committee and go further into a matter which is so vital to our area, since transportation, Mr. Speaker, is the lifeline of the Atlantic provinces.

**Mr. R. W. Prittie (Burnaby-Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the house or his representative do not wish to suggest a supper break I will carry on. I am afraid this is what I shall have to do.