

Atlantic Regional Freight Assistance Act

them in particular. First, I think the amendment which will bring aid to truckers can be welcomed. This is a matter about which the maritime trucking industry has felt keenly for many years, because big brother railway had certain advantages which little brother trucker did not have. As the minister said, this provision has not only the advantage of providing an element of competition, which I think is a good thing, but it will also provide the immediate answer to one of the problems that have bedevilled industry in the Atlantic region since the National Transportation Act was passed a number of sessions ago.

The worst by-product of that legislation was that l.c.l. rates took off into the great beyond and in some instances maritime industries were faced with increases in the transportation of less than carload lots of up to 500 per cent. This threw an enormous burden on those industries, to say the very least. It seems to me that this situation will be improved by providing the truckers with the advantages set forth in the bill. Truckers will be dealing with the kind of traffic that I presume could be classed as l.c.l., though in their case it would have to be modified at least in name. In any event, with regard to small volume shipments that a truck can easily carry but which occupy only part of a railway freight car the provision in the bill will go a long way toward removing what has become a very unhappy situation for many industries in Atlantic Canada.

I now refer to the minister's suggestion which is not contained in the legislation but is a method of carrying out the purposes of Bill C-207, that is, the establishment of a joint federal-provincial committee to deal with subsidies. This will give us a very useful guide when the complete package of legislation is introduced in the fall. We will be able to see how the representatives of the Canadian Transport Commission have been able to work with representatives from eastern Canada. We will know what unexpected pitfalls have developed in their dealings over a period of a few months, what sort of pressures have been placed upon that body to grant subsidies, those asking for help, those who need help and those who do not need it. This information should be very useful as a guide to what should be included in the legislative package which will come before us in the fall.

I think we would all agree that the Maritime Freight Rates Act, commendable though its purposes were in 1927, has probably

become out of touch with the times. The complaint is often made that it helps a certain segment, that is, the railways, but not particularly the shippers. I believe that taking steps to change the focus from help to the carriers to help to the shippers is a good one initially, and I hope it will be reflected more fully when the new legislative package is introduced in the fall.

In my final point I am in complete disagreement with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) and the legislative approach that has been placed before us this morning. I refer to clause 5 of the bill wherein the Governor in Council is given the power to vary or remove the reduction in tariffs for the preferred movements of traffic described in section 4 of the Maritime Freight Rates Act. In my opinion this is indeed a very bad principle. If this clause is passed we will, in effect, be repealing a statutory provision and replacing it with an administrative decision. The voice of parliament has spoken one way and we are being asked to muzzle that voice by granting to the government—that is what it amounts to in effect—the right to take statutory provisions and knock them completely out of action or vary them.

If this bill were not an interim measure, such an approach would give rise to a debate lasting many days. I believe this sort of provision strikes at the very heart of the operations of parliament. I give the minister fair notice that we intend to resist this clause. Our spirit of co-operation this morning in trying, hopefully, to get the legislation through before the house turns to other business this afternoon is justified in my mind by the fact that this is an interim measure, and we look forward to a much more orthodox legislative approach when the Minister of Transport presents the full legislative package to us in the fall session.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the Transport and Communications Committee which visited the Atlantic provinces. On that visit we had five or six days of very intensive work and heard a large number of briefs on all aspects of the problems of transportation and regional disparity in the Atlantic provinces. The plea heard most often and stressed most emphatically was that the trucking industry be allowed the subsidy advantages accorded the railways in that region. Because of the justice of the case presented by the truckers during our visit to that region of Canada, I