

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ACT

MEASURE TO RESTRICT COMMISSION'S POWERS

Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Windsor-Walkerville) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-439, to amend the National Transportation Act (review and re-hearing).

Some hon. Members: Explain.

Mr. MacGuigan: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is formally to restrict the power of the Canadian Transport Commission to hold new hearings on public matters that have already been decided.

At present, the discretion of the Commission to review, rescind or alter its orders and decisions and to rehear applications, is somewhat unclear. In many cases the rehearing of matters can cause tremendous hardship, especially to public interest groups that wish to oppose applications made by regulated industries, because these groups do not normally have the funding to fight a prolonged legal battle. The re-hearing of decided issues by the CTC should therefore be strictly regulated by legislation.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

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POSTAL SERVICE OPERATIONS ACT, 1978

MEASURE TO ENSURE CONTINUATION OF REGULAR POSTAL OPERATIONS

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of Labour) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-45, to provide for the continuation of regular postal service operations.

Motion agreed to, bill read the first time and ordered to be printed.

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REGULATIONS AND OTHER STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

CONCURRENCE IN THIRD REPORT OF STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River) moved that the third report of the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments, presented to the House on Thursday, April 6, 1978, be concurred in.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I think it would not be amiss to borrow a few minutes of the time of the House to elaborate on the reasons for this particular motion which was passed unanimously by the committee, and to refresh hon. members' minds.

It provides, in the event a final report cannot be presented by the joint committee dealing with our terms of reference related to the green paper on legislation and access to government documents, that after the summoning of a new parlia-

Regulations and Statutory Instruments

ment the order of reference to the committee be renewed and all evidence and proceedings given in relation to this matter before the committee be included in the said order of reference.

Of course the committee knew that all it could do was make a recommendation in the hope that, when a new parliament is called, there will be a new government which may be more sympathetic to the situation, and that those hon. members on the government side who worked their battered way to this side of the House might also be able to give support to the proposal contained in this motion. This is a request from the existing parliament to what hopefully will be a new and more lively one, to move quickly and finish a task which should have been done long ago.

In February, 1976, this House unanimously approved a motion supporting, in principle, freedom of information legislation, which clearly inferred that the government should get on with the job. In supporting the 1976 motion, the House accepted the views of the committee which had been studying the issue for well over a year, and the House also adopted the position of a government task force on information. Furthermore, government officials had been studying the matter, both in Canada and abroad, and had at their command all the facts, statistics, and studies on comparative legislation, necessary to draft a bill. But those of us who expected the government to act were sadly disappointed. I am instructed that the matter was considered at least twice at cabinet or cabinet committee level, but the assorted dinosaurs who make up the top level of government, both elected and appointed, just would not hear of it.

Freedom of information means that the truth is likely to come out, and these people and their leader react to truth like the devil to holy water.

Joseph Pulitzer said, "There is not a crime, there is not a dodge, there is not a swindle, there is not a vice, which does not live by secrecy." This can be equally applied to the errors and evils of government.

After 15 months or more, in June, 1977, this House was given a green paper, designed to delay and divert the request for "right to know" laws, and this tactic now seems to have succeeded. It took six months to drag the government into referring the paper to the committee last December, and it now appears as if there will not be time to complete the study and to report before dissolution.

A large number of organizations and people have appeared before the committee, or have presented briefs, and it would be a great shame to compel them to repeat their efforts. Nearly all who have appeared support the proposition that there be a law giving the public the right to know the facts about government operations, with limited exemptions and a clear and binding appeal process. There is the all-party committee on freedom of information, representing members in both Houses. In fact all parties have given their blessing, including the Liberal party which took a very strong stand in support of judicial review at its last convention.