

Hon. Mr. CALDER: No man in this House would hesitate for one second to give the Government control of rates and full regulation of aeroplanes.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: That is in the Bill.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: Yes, it is in the Bill. But I mean that any difference of opinion existing among ourselves applies to only two points in the Bill. As to highways, the Minister himself said he would not bring the Bill into operation even so far as Dominion highways were concerned, nor with regard to inter-provincial and international traffic, unless it was agreed by the provinces that he should exercise rate control over their highways. There is no use in talking about those parts of the measure upon which there is agreement; so I say there remain only two points which we are called upon to consider at the present time. The first is the proposed control over shipping on the Great Lakes, and the second is the proposed use here of a system which has been in use in Great Britain for some three years.

I have already stated that so far as the main object of the Bill is concerned I am in complete sympathy with it. Now, I believe that the Minister's intention and in a sense his conception with regard to the Bill were right. But new Ministers are always very busy; they are crowded every minute of the day. They are not accustomed to the things that usually happen in governmental business, for the worries of the private business man are different from those of the Minister. I think the Minister of Transport was too busy to consider the provisions of this Bill as they should have been considered, and also that he had not at his elbow the necessary legal experts to give him proper advice on the matter. We have evidence to support this view. The manner in which, time after time, the Minister freely accepted amendments proposed in the committee indicates that in the Bill were provisions which would never have been there at all if he had been properly advised. Take the provision regarding coastal shipping, for instance. It was promptly deleted. Take the provision that would have affected ships whose traffic originates in the Maritimes and which year in and year out carry their cargoes up into the Great Lakes. That, too, is gone. There was even a provision whereby the Minister would take control over all ships propelled by any means other than oars. That was absolutely silly.

Hon. Mr. DUFF: You are right.

Hon. Mr. CALDER.

Hon. Mr. CALDER: I say that while the intention back of the Bill was good, the Minister did not have the necessary time nor advice to be able to put the Bill into the shape in which it should have been. What is the situation now? There is a very strongly divided opinion. What is the attitude of the West? We must look to that. I think the honourable junior senator from Winnipeg (Hon. Mr. Haig) is correct. From the Great Lakes to the mountains you will find no public opinion in favour of this Bill. Is Parliament going to jam the measure through both Houses contrary to that public opinion? I doubt the wisdom of doing that.

We are told that there is now before the United States Congress a bill similar to this proposal so far as lake traffic is concerned. What knowledge have we as to what that measure will contain if it is ever passed? None at all. It is admitted that any power of control which we propose to give under this Bill would not be worth the snap of a finger unless the Americans came in and co-operated with us in the exercise of that control, and at this moment we have no assurance at all as to whether that American bill will pass, nor as to the measure of control which will result from it if it is passed.

Let me refer now to the part of the Bill providing for agreed charges. If there was one feature which gave me more concern than another it was the possible effect of this part, if actually put into force. The committee had before it nothing worthy of the name of evidence to show how the agreed charges system has been working out in Great Britain, where it was adopted two or three years ago. It is quite true that we had a statement by representatives of railways, and one or two cables were received from persons in the Old Country. But had we a single bit of testimony from any person familiar with the facts as to how the scheme is actually operating in Great Britain? We had not. Therefore we had no opportunity of cross-examining any person familiar with the facts. But it is argued: "Oh, well, the system has been in force over there two or three years. Let us try it out." I think this House and the other House are entitled to a little more than that. Once the fact that the British have adopted this system was brought to our attention in the committee we should, I think, have had called before us some well-informed witnesses from England. Then there would have been real evidence as to the actual situation in the Old Country to assist us in passing judgment upon this feature.