

*Transportation*

house. I confess that I am not sure just how many amendments have been made to it by the committee of the whole house since, and I doubt if anyone knows how many there were.

One can readily understand why caution should be exercised before attacking this bill, particularly in view of the number of modifications. However, I intend to do so as many others have. My remarks on this occasion will be of a general nature since there have been ample opportunities to make more specific ones as we dealt with the terms of the bill clause by clause.

The bill meets the intent of the minister to let competition between the various modes of transportation—rail, truck, air and ship—set the rates to be charged. Indeed, this was recommended by the MacPherson commission set up for this purpose; a commission of experts who might be expected to know what they were talking about. But are we to accept uncritically the views of these experts? In my view we should certainly not do so, because experts are often wrong.

Richard J. Needham, columnist for the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, put it much better than I can in this article he wrote for the *Canadian Churchman* of December 1966.

I've spent some 50 years listening to the experts, and each year my respect for them dwindles. The experts assured me there wouldn't be a second world war. There was. The experts assured me the second world war would be followed by a calamitous depression. It wasn't. For some years now, the experts have been assuring me that the new machine—automation, they called it—would put millions of Canadians out of work. And what's happened? In most parts of Canada, employers are screaming for help. There's a serious shortage of workers, with no letup in sight.

Modern labour has its battalions of experts, so has management, so have governments and their proliferating agencies. These experts all talk at once, they usually say different things, they are wrong much of the time, and how could it be otherwise? For all their charts and graphs and statistics and projections, they are dealing with two immeasurables—a future which is, and always will be known only to God; and that elusive contradictory, unreliable factor, human nature.

However, for those who might consider these views cardinal heresy, I will refer later to some experts whose views are quite different from those of the MacPherson commission.

The minister is deceived if he thinks the rates the railways set will be fair. The railway will charge all it can get. If he carries out his intentions as set out in this bill he will create grave injustices—grave injustices, because all regions of this very large country

[Mr. Cantelon.]

will not be fairly treated if we free the railways to charge whatever rate the traffic will bear. The minister apparently believes that clause 16 of the bill, new clause 16, and sections 1 and 336 will provide safeguards to prevent the railways overcharging the shipper. They will not, in my view, nor in the view of many others.

We ought not to delude ourselves that the railways will charge less or that they will even maintain rates. They will certainly raise them. This bill will give them the power to do so and they intend to use it.

The passage of this bill leaves only one safeguard for Canadians. It is the safeguard of adequate competition. Competition the minister hopes can and will exert pressure on the railways so effectively that they will be compelled to charge a rate that is in the national interest, not the rate that is in the railways' interest. In my view this competition does not exist in certain areas of the country today and it will not exist in the near future. Hence my contention that there will be discrimination. Furthermore, for certain products it is not certain that competition will ever be effective to regulate rates.

The minister, because of the objections of the opposition, has rewritten clause 1 and hopes he has eliminated areas of discrimination by the railways. I hope he has too, but I doubt it. I doubt it simply because the competitive principle is supposed to operate, and I do not think it can operate effectively.

I said "national interest" very deliberately. When Sir John A. Macdonald had the first national railway built he did so because without it he knew the western half of Canada would fall by default into the orbit of the United States. The Liberals in those days could not see the truth of this fact. Today I doubt if the Minister of Transport can see any more clearly. Does he not know that the railways are still instruments of national policy and that in this large diverse country we must keep them so?

The minister's main argument is that by freeing the railways to set their own rates the country will escape the \$100 million annual subsidy which this country pays to the railways. Perhaps we will, but it will cost the people of this country as a whole much more than that to do it. What is worse, the cost will be so unevenly and inequitably distributed that some sections of the country are going to want to shift their freight to a north-south pattern to escape from the injustice.