

*Transportation*

of years. It is my belief this house should not be asked to yield up, without some safeguards, its rights and responsibilities to the people who have sent us here.

If this is not done, I am quite convinced that the powers of the commission will grow swiftly and, in due course, it will become harder and harder to find any method of examining or suggesting changes and alterations when it is essential to do so. Once we give up this right, I doubt that we will ever get it back.

● (7:00 p.m.)

**Mr. Fawcett:** Mr. Chairman, I do not wish to take up too much time of the committee, although I should like to say a few words in respect of this bill. I was a member of the committee on transport and communications which sat fairly consistently all through the summer studying the bill and the briefs submitted in respect of it. We had the opportunity to question the various witnesses. At the outset I should like to say that I agree with the other hon. members who have spoken that the committee members were very attentive and attempted to do a good job not only in respect of Bill C-231 but also in respect of everything else which came before the committee during the summer months. I wish to congratulate the minister for having given an attentive ear to the various briefs. As a result he came up with a number of amendments which were in line to some extent at least with the points raised in the briefs presented by the various provinces and other parties concerned with the provisions of the bill.

In so far as the intent of the bill, to define and implement a national transportation policy, is concerned, I am sure all members of our party are in agreement that this is something which is very necessary in a country such as ours where the geography is such that we have miles and miles of sparsely populated land and thousands of acres of land which are not productive in the sense of providing something which will assist the various modes of transportation. This bill deals with an over-all transportation policy and provides for the setting up of a commission which will have some control over the various modes of transportation, but the fact remains that basically the bill deals with railway transportation. I think this indicates that the railways are still one of our major modes of transportation, particularly for bulk goods such as concentrates, potash, grain and so on. Because of the tremendous amount of these commodities which the railways are called upon to handle, when we

move away from some kind of regulation of such operations I think we are doing something which has an effect on people all across Canada.

The purpose of this bill is to provide an economic and efficient system, making use of all modes of transportation. This too is a very worth-while endeavour, but I am wondering how far in this direction we can go through the medium of this bill when it deals almost completely, I would say, with railway transportation. There is not too much in it which ties down other modes of transportation. It only deals with them, one might say, in a negative sort of way.

I believe the railway strike last fall is one of the main reasons that the presentation of this bill was expedited. At that time it was felt that we cannot afford to have such things as general railway strikes. We saw the effect that the railway strike had on the economy of our country. Therefore we felt we had to look at this whole situation from the point of view of how further strikes might be avoided.

I believe it was brought out very clearly that the problem which had developed between the railways and the unions was created because of the fact that the railways to a great extent had been restricted and were not able to operate as other industries operate in a free enterprise system. Therefore labour and management just could not get together. Management would not move to try to negotiate with labour because in the first place the railways thought they were so restricted that they could not afford to negotiate. As a result we had a major railway strike. Out of this railway strike came Bill C-231. It, of course, is the offspring of another bill, C-120, which I understand never reached the floor of the house.

I am wondering how we can provide an economic and efficient railway system—here I am dealing with railway transportation only—when at the same time we are removing the regulations which now are in effect in respect of the railways. We must take into consideration that the railways are restricted, as they must be, in a good number of areas. There must be regulations in respect of the handling of grain and other commodities. The maritime freight rate freeze is another example. This leaves a limited number of areas wherein the railways can increase rates.

I am afraid of one of two things, either that freight rates will be increased to such an extent that they will be excessive and will be