

*Transportation*

to perform the administrative functions which parliament may authorize in regard to licensing, tariffs and economic regulation of transportation. I do not intend to go into what the minister said, but the bill certainly bears quite a resemblance to what he stated at that time, at least so far as some of its phrasing is concerned.

In speaking in the house the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) put forward the possibility that a national transport board would perhaps coin for itself the appellation of "bureaucratic monster". I do not know about that but I believe that the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard), who has just spoken, referred to the Canadian Trucking Association who view it as a "bureaucratic colossus". I do not know whether that is the case, but in the minister's speech which opened debate on this bill he suggested that this was certainly not the intention of the legislation.

Some doubts are cast in this regard by the Maritime Transportation Commission and perhaps I might put them on the record at this time.

The idea of the establishment of a national transportation body is not new. The commission points out that the MacPherson royal commission in its 1961 report recommended the creation of a non-regulatory national transportation advisory council, a purely advisory council, not a regulatory one.

• (5:40 p.m.)

In the words of the MacPherson Royal Commission the council would be freed of regulatory responsibility, would be able to judge and assess the impact and effect of the decisions of all transport regulatory agencies and would be empowered to confer and consult with all interested parties and all levels of government. This advisory council would then recommend broad policies through the Minister of Transport.

I have already referred to the view of the truckers' association. The Maritime Transportation Commission says that obviously there is a need for some co-ordination in transportation policy in Canada and quotes the MacPherson commission report as follows:

—there exists nowhere below the cabinet level in Canada any organization or advisory body sufficiently broadly based to undertake the task of continually developing goals for national transportation policy or a broad outline of measures to achieve them.

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I hope the Minister of Transport was correct in what he said regarding this board. The Maritime Transportation Commission went on to say:

Such a non-regulatory advisory council as recommended by the royal commission would in this commission's view meet an existing need and should perform a valuable service. The replacing of the existing regulatory boards by a super regulatory board, on the other hand, would appear to achieve nothing useful.

We shall have to wait and see, Mr. Speaker, whether this statement is correct. I hope this board will not be another bureaucratic colossus, as it has been referred to. I thought I ought to put that on the record. We hope that this board will not be another bureaucratic body. We hope that the minister's contention is correct and that what he has stated will be carried out.

Second, I wish to deal with another matter arising from the minister's remarks and which is contained in the bill. I refer to the Maritime Freight Rates Act. In the few minutes I have at my disposal perhaps I might refer to that act. As hon. members probably know, the act was passed in 1927 and provides a 20 per cent subsidy on all rail movements within the maritime region, which extends as far west as Levis and Diamond in the province of Quebec. Also, the original 20 per cent subsidy has been increased to 30 per cent on rail traffic—it does not apply to import traffic—moving from the maritime region to other parts of Canada on the portion of the rail rate earned east of Levis and Diamond. The act was passed in 1927 as a result of the Royal Commission on Maritime Claims and was intended to restore in a broad measure maritime rail rates to the position they held in relation to other Canadian rail rates prior to 1912. This was to continue into perpetuity.

What has happened is that this has not taken place. With the advent of competition by trucks, with the increase in rail rates and with trucking competition in other parts of Canada, the effect has been to distort the position in the maritimes. This has meant that the Maritime Freight Rates Act in its present form has been unable to maintain the relationship between Atlantic province rates and rates outside the region. This has taken place despite the fact that there has been an increase in subsidy under the Maritime Freight Rates Act.

The present legislation calls for a two-year freeze on maritime freight rates under the act. The only difficulty in my mind stems