

*Transportation*

Perhaps I might give a hypothetical example which may or may not be close to being accurate. If it costs one cent, per 100 miles to haul a bushel of grain and if 30 million bushels are coming off a branch line each year on the average, 30 million times two cents is 60 million cents a year which is going into the revenue of the railways. If much of that cost involved in carrying that grain to produce that revenue could be reduced by using the other person's line, then I think this would be a rational solution to the problem of reducing the cost to that railway.

Under this bill, there is the power to recommend that these things be done. I simply say that after the experience of the Canadian National-Canadian Pacific Act of the 1930's, this new board should learn from the mistakes of the past and should have the power to direct national operation. I put this view forward to the minister because only he has the influence to say to his officials that they should draft new amendments to these clauses in order to make this possible.

So, it is up to the minister now. I think he knows my views. I made them known in respect of Bill C-120 two years ago. I made them known again in the committee in respect of Bill C-231. I made them known in the house through my remarks on second reading. He knows that these observations are supported by the biggest customers the railways have, the grain companies of western Canada who provide most of the profit of both railways. He knows that they want it. He knows they have suggested it. He knows also that this is the mistake we made in the 1930's in respect of the Canadian National-Canadian Pacific bill. If this parliament wants to go forward with this bill as it is today and repeat the same mistakes, then those on the government side cannot say they have not been warned.

In all sincerity, I ask the minister what harm would come from giving this national transportation commission the power to direct and the power to penalize by reducing the subsidy. What harm could there be? The only objections would come from the railways who are trained in squawking. On behalf of all Canadians, I should like to say that for once in this parliament I would hope that we could learn from the mistakes of the past and produce legislation which is a result of learning from those mistakes. I would hope that we could establish guide lines and give power to the national transportation commission so that it would be in a position to do something which we have been requesting for years.

[Mr. Hamilton.]

When I say this I have in mind the Duff report and all the speeches which were made by politicians when the act was passed with such high hopes over 30 years ago.

In the second part of my remarks which I address to the minister, I should like to refer to the essential problem of democratic government. In the history of democratic government, as more and more of the economy has come under the control of elected governments, it has become necessary to turn over the administration of large sections of parliament's responsibilities to boards, crown corporations, and other agencies of the crown. No one denies the history of the last 40 years in this regard, but one thought keeps coming to mind. If parliament turns over its power to a non-elected board, an appointed crown corporation or an appointed agency, how will the people through their representatives have any control over the actions of that board, crown corporation or agency without interfering with the efficiency of the operation? That is the key problem involved.

● (5:50 p.m.)

We have all witnessed the troubles parliament has experienced in respect of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Had parliament been wiser in laying down guide lines at the beginning, and in renewing them from time to time, much of this trouble would not have existed. In respect of the transportation system we have a situation which involves not just what we see or hear on television and radio, but what we will experience economically because of the delegation of tremendous powers over all transportation services. There is nothing in this bill which indicates we have learned from our mistakes in delegating powers to other agencies, boards or crown corporations. All we have in this bill in respect of powers can be found at page 12 in clause 20. This provides that the board shall present a report to parliament each year.

No matter how carefully or how many times one reads this bill, nothing can be found of a definitive nature which gives parliament any control over the body established by this bill. Members of parliament cannot be fully informed about the operations of this transportation commission, nor can they under any circumstances be adequately qualified to deal with its operations in detail. The only thing we can examine is the report which is submitted to parliament. No definitive action can be taken.