

Transportation

we face the fact that this measure, if passed, will go to the committee on transport and communications, we will be prepared to seek out the information we desire, look for the clarifications that are necessary and get those explanations which it is very probable we will be able to secure at that particular stage of the bill. When this measure is before the committee all those who are interested will be able to make their representations. It will be possible to call expert witnesses and to question them on the effects of the application of such a bill. Provincial governments will be able to make their representations, as well as farm organizations and other interested parties.

• (8:20 p.m.)

I therefore believe that this bill will form the basis of a very interesting and constructive analysis and study, once this measure reaches the committee on transport and communications. And so, Mr. Speaker, while indicating our intention at the present time to further analyse the bill and to suggest amendments to its various clauses, we will support the principle of the bill, which we understand is to define and implement the national transportation policy of Canada.

As I have said, we reserve the right to offer suggestions, recommendations and amendments, but at the same time we believe that the time has come for the enunciation and implementation of a national transportation policy which will be more up to date and will meet more realistically the challenges that we face at the present time. It is therefore our intention to support the second reading of this bill while reserving our right to participate actively in the further stages of the bill and to contribute to the improvement of the measure now before us.

Mr. F. J. Bigg (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, in my view this bill represents an attempt to bring our transportation policy up to date. I hope that our future policy contained in this bill will take advantage of what we have learned in the past. We hear much about regionalism, and the impression might be gained that the big crop which is being reaped in western Canada today will solve all other problems in that part of the country. However I would suggest that if western Canada did not harvest a large crop from year to year this country might still remain a somewhat backward colony.

It was the opening up of the west which gave Canada the great impetus. It was the

[Mr. Patterson.]

building of the railway that made us a nation. I hope that in implementing this new transportation policy we will avoid some of the mistakes of the past and go forward in the building of a bigger and better country. I suggest that one of the mistakes we made in the past was in seeking to bind our country in perpetuity or, to put it another way, to let ourselves be bound by the hands of the dead. I hope that our new policy will be a dynamic one, one that is attuned to varying circumstances.

I believe that we should establish a knowledgeable transport board to handle Canada's tremendous problems in this field and I support wholeheartedly the setting up of such a body. At the same time we must make sure that this group does not become a little empire unto itself and does not forget the important reason for which it is established. I am therefore opposed to the creation of a sort of super crown corporation. I would like to see it become an advisory board not only to the Minister of Transport but to parliament as a whole. It is my hope that the parliamentary committee on transportation will work hard and become more knowledgeable, and that, together with this new super board of transport commissioners, it will work for the betterment of transportation in Canada. I am convinced that this can be achieved.

It might sound like sheer heresy for a western Canadian to say that we should perhaps take a second look at the Crowsnest pass rates to see whether or not there is a better and more equitable way of sharing the cost of transportation across our nation. Perhaps preferred rates might not be necessary if we found some way of stabilizing the price of agricultural products at a level at which we could pay competitive freight rates. I would like to think that when this commission is set up it will have a bold vision of our future. It is possible that if we calculated our present gross national product and divided it by 20 million we might find that we cannot support a railway; but if we approach this problem with the vision which we had when we built the Great Slave railway we will be encouraged to build new railways into the hinterland and into undiscovered areas where Canada's great wealth lies, and where perhaps still greater wealth will be discovered. I therefore hope that when this commission is set up it will not be restrictive but will act with vision and enterprise, that it will plan for a bigger and better Canada, not only able