

*Transportation*

we will progress at a faster rate than that evidenced at the present time. But I think it is too early to predict what this legislation will do. I do not think we have available to us the kind of educated opinion that we need in order to arrive at a sane and sensible conclusion. Therefore, I would ask the minister to give consideration to withholding second reading at the present time and to allowing the committee immediately to go to work on this legislation, so that members are able to make an assessment which is in keeping with the gravity of the legislation when it does finally come before the house for second reading.

**Mr. H. W. Danforth (Kent (Ont.)):** Mr. Speaker, the news of the introduction of this transportation bill in the House of Commons was viewed with a great deal of real exhilaration on the part of the citizens of Ontario, especially those of southwestern Ontario. They felt that at last there was at least a chance and an opportunity to remove some of the restrictions and regulations in the government's transportation policy which have seriously curtailed and throttled the industrial expansion of that particular area.

• (8:20 p.m.)

For years industry, chambers of commerce, agricultural leaders and citizens of the area had petitioned, pleaded with and had interviews with the various governments concerned, but all in vain. Now, at last, with the entire proposition brought forward before parliament for consideration it was felt that an opportunity would prevail for views to be expressed on this most important legislation. There is one sad aspect to this, however. There was a growing feeling on all sides, that from the manner in which the railway strike was being handled by the present government a crisis was being deliberately fermented that might bring forth a climate which would be opportune for the passing of such legislation with strong public support.

On listening to the presentation by the Minister of Transport, and the various speakers who have taken part in the debate of this, the second reading, the magnitude and complexity of the bill is very, very evident. Those who are directly affected have found much to be concerned about, both in the clauses that pertain to their particular industries, and to the very principles that were either just mentioned in passing, or not dealt with at all.

Surely the people in Ontario have a great deal to be concerned about. Those in the area

[Mr. Coates.]

I have the honour to represent, who are engaged in industry, are very much concerned to know what is meant by this equalization of freight rates; to know what is meant by a national policy. The farmers in my particular area want to know whether this will have any effect on the subsidies paid on freight with respect to western grains. How will they fare under a new bill?

The truckers too, are very much concerned. Will the action taken by this government in this transport legislation have the effect of removing the contentious subsidies the truckers have opposed for years? Will this enable them to compete on a more equitable basis? Will this provide the climate for competition and expansion they have sought for so long? Will this indeed be a national policy that will work toward the interests of all?

I was very much impressed when I heard the various participants in this debate talk of a national policy. Some expressed concern that this policy might break down into regional areas. Various members spoke of a particular problem that is of direct concern from a regional point of view.

Here in Ontario, and in Quebec, Mr. Speaker, how can we be expected to take any other course of action than we have, when we hear the suggestion that freight rates presently in operation, that is to say, government regulations in effect in the maritimes, will be untouched, that government regulations of direct concern to western grain producers will be untouched; that regulations concerning the Crowsnest pass will remain untouched?

When we hear this sort of thing being elaborated, when we hear the minister and various members of the government alluding to this bill as one which will enable the railways to be placed in a competitive position, one that will once and for all enable the railways to charge rates that will place them on an economic footing, why should those of us in Ontario and Quebec not become concerned?

We want to know where the money is to come from. We heard that the government at the present time is paying \$100 million in subsidies. We heard that the increase in pay to the railway workers conceivably could add up to \$30 million. We understand from the railway representations that the railways need more money in order to operate in the black. We are getting an uneasy feeling, Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, and I am sure in Quebec also, that if there is to be little change in the