

ours by right but at the pleasure of the government. At least that is the way I read clause 5 which says:

—the Governor in Council may vary or remove the reduction in tariffs for the preferred movements of traffic—

He can do this at any time. These clauses of the bill, certainly clause 3 and the limited application of the subsidy to the trucking industry, do not represent in my view what the truckers wanted at all notwithstanding the telegram the minister has read into the record. Certainly it is not what the truckers wanted when they appeared before the Transport Committee, and that is indicated in their brief.

I can understand the minister laughing when he hears references to the Transport Committee because it has become a bit of a standing joke with the government. I can understand the humour with which he treats any reference to that committee, because this government treats all the committees of this house with complete disdain. They look on them as a complete joke. They look on committees of the house as merely the handmaidens of the government set up to carry out the will of the government. That is not what the committees were set up for in the first instance.

The fifth report of the Transport Committee is a very historic one because in my submission this will be the last time a committee of this house will ever bring in a report or a recommendation with which the government takes issue. From now on we can only expect committees to make reports to the house that the government agrees with and has had a hand in drafting. I understand that was said last night by the Minister of Justice.

The hon. member for York South said in a letter to his constituents that from now on no amendments would be accepted by a committee save those that the government had agreed to in the first instance. In other words, the committees of the house are just a joke, and unfortunately the laugh is on the opposition. We have given up our right in respect of supply. We have allowed the estimates to be removed from the house and they are now in the hands of committees with, in most cases, partisan chairmen who are there to carry out the wishes of the government.

Having made those few remarks about the now infamous fifth report of the Transport Committee, which is still on the Order Paper,

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and the twelfth report of the transport committee which contains a recommendation concerning the committee study of transport problems in the Atlantic provinces, concurrence in which has yet to be moved. I want to go on to another subject. I would like to make a few remarks which are of particular interest to the province that both the minister and I have the responsibility to represent in this house. When the truckers appeared before the Transport Committee in St. John's, and in Moncton, if my memory serves me correctly, in making a plea to have the benefits of the Maritime Freight Rates Act extended to the trucking industry they pointed out a number of very interesting things. For example, there was evidence to suggest that the railways were using the M.F.R.A. to subsidize their trucking fleets in the Atlantic provinces, thus constituting grossly unfair competition for the private enterprise truckers.

• (11:30 a.m.)

There was also a very strong recommendation concerning the passage of truck traffic across Cabot Strait on the Newfoundland ferry system. By virtue of the terms of union, rail freight moving across is treated the same as if the railway extended right across the gulf. But this privilege does not apply to the truckers. This places the truckers in a grossly unfair position and at an extreme disadvantage vis-à-vis the railways, because when going across the gulf they have to pay the regular commercial vehicle freight rate. As I say, the trucking industry is put at a tremendous disadvantage in terms of competing with the railways.

I would have liked these matters to be dealt with in the legislation. I hope the minister will refer to them when he replies to the questions we have asked. I will have more to say on the other clauses of the bill, Mr. Chairman, but before resuming my seat I wish to register my protest at the way the legislation has been drafted and the principle contained therein that the subsidy may be removed at any time at the discretion of the government. I also protest the discretionary powers the government, and the minister in particular, will have with respect to the application of the subsidy to the truckers.

Mr. Thomson: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a few brief remarks in connection with the bill. I thought it passing strange that the government should arrange to introduce the bill when the Transport Committee was sitting. This may be a mark of political