

Transportation

of the establishment of a bureaucratic monstrosity, as the Minister of Transport expressed it. At the time he said that, he said that he hoped it would not become such, that it really was not the intention of the government that it would become such.

Mr. Turner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully say to the hon. member that I do not think that was the minister's expression. He said that some other people may have called it that.

Mr. Howard: I will accept that correction, Mr. Speaker. Some people may have called it a bureaucratic monstrosity, but without referring to the minister's exact words I think he said that he hoped it would not be and that it was not the intention of the government that it should be. However, regardless of whether the minister felt that it might or might not be, nowhere in the legislation is there any guarantee that it will not be. Nowhere is there any check or balance against its being a bureaucratic monstrosity.

We now know that certain boards and commissions established under the aegis of federal law are in fact bureaucratic monstrosities. They do exist at the moment, so much so that some of them are in effect able to thumb their collective noses at what parliament may desire and go along in their own merry way regardless of the desires and opinions of the Canadian public. That is the fact in certain areas.

As there is no guarantee, check or balance in the legislation against this commission becoming a bureaucratic monstrosity, I doubt that we should give the final stamp of approval to something of this nature. That is one of the facets of this legislation which is not appealing to me.

Another facet is that there is an open-ended and unenunciated quality in the matter of freight rates. If there are adjustments upwards in freight rates we all know that the freezes and guarantees established at the moment, and which apparently are to be perpetuated, will be paid for in large measure by those of us who live in the western extremity of the nation. For instance, the north line of Canadian National Railways has perhaps as high a freight rate structure attached to the commodities carried along it as any other area in Canada, and those of us who live in that part of the country certainly do not feel the frozen rates structure that exists in other that we should have to subsidize even further

[Mr. Howard.]

parts of the nation. This is another facet of the bill which does not appeal to me.

● (5:30 p.m.)

Perhaps the most important reason why the bill does not have the appeal it should rests in the very history of the Liberal party. I am making special reference here to the history of the Liberal party with regard to the one form of transportation to which the minister studiously avoided referring—shipping. He made a couple of passing references to water transport but he did so in the historical sense that this was the way Canada had developed and so on, and that there was a competitive feature about water transportation on the lakes. Beyond that there was not a single mention of the very important question of shipping and of the manner in which it affects the people of this nation, particularly those who live in the coastal extremities.

The needs of both the east and west coast have not been given, in my hearing at any rate, any examination in this house. Certainly, as I said, the minister avoided reference to this subject. Representing a constituency on the Atlantic coast, as he does, the Minister of Transport above all others should automatically have thought in terms of the effect that shipping would have on the communities on the Atlantic coast and he should have outlined the intention of the legislation with respect to shipping as a means of transport. The British Columbia coast undoubtedly has such needs.

With regard to the history of the Liberal party one cannot help remembering that it was in office at a time when our merchant shipping fleet was almost wiped out of existence, at a time when that fleet was transferred to other nations, and at a time when we could have established and maintained a merchant shipping fleet in this nation. It was a Liberal government that refused to take cognizance of the necessity for a country such as Canada to maintain a shipping fleet to carry commodities in domestic trade as well as commodities in import and export trade.

We cannot help but recollect that it was a Liberal government that permitted the subsidy provisions for shipbuilding, instituted by Mr. Balcer, I believe, when he was minister of transport in the Conservative government, to lapse. The shipbuilding subsidy had had an effect on the activity in the shipyards of this nation. When it came time for the shipbuilding subsidy to be reinstated it was reinstated in such a way and at such a level