

matter to be referred to our Parliamentary Counsel and whomever he wishes to consult in the matter.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: Honourable senators, I feel that I should say a word about the amendment now before the house.

Unlike the amendments dealt with by the Committee of the Whole, on which I had the opportunity of consulting the government beforehand, it was intimated to me only yesterday that there probably would be an amendment of the character of the one now before us. I have not had the opportunity of seeing the amendment moved by the senator from Toronto (Hon. Mr. Campbell). I do not wish to be discourteous to my friend, only two courses of action are open to me. I could adjourn the debate in order to give the house the benefit of specific instructions received by me from the government, or I could suggest that the matter be dealt with now. I take the responsibility of saying that the government feels that amendments to this measure at this stage would not materially help the situation.

I have heard suggestions from the Maritimes that the bill should be amended because, if carried in its present form, the Maritimes might lose something by it. On the other hand, it has been said that the bill should be amended in such a way that a possible interpretation might give that area of Canada more benefits than the Minister intended it should have. Those are the two extreme views. I would point out to the house that there is a wide divergence of opinion as to how this section should be amended. I am advised that the lawyers worked on it during the week-end with a view to devising an amendment which would be acceptable to everyone, and that they ended up about where they started.

In view of the late stage of the session, and the fact that the Transport Committee considered this bill over a period of fifteen days, I would suggest that the amendment be voted on now and disposed of one way or another.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Robertson: If the house sees fit to adopt the amendment, it will go to the other place, where all its ramifications can be considered; if on the other hand, it is rejected, the matter will be at an end.

I do not think that the Senate can, in fairness, be accused of acting hastily in its consideration of this legislation. Without wishing to be disrespectful to my friend from Toronto, I think the amendment should be disposed of now, one way or another.

Hon. Mr. Campbell: May I ask the honourable leader if he would object to having this matter referred to the Parliamentary Counsel to ascertain if it is possible to draft a section which would clearly express the intention of the government as explained by the honourable minister when he was before the committee?

Hon. Mr. Robertson: I do not know that I have any particular objection to the suggestion, but I would point out that I have consulted the Law Clerk two or three times about this measure, and my information is that it is most difficult to reach agreement between the conflicting interests. Had my friend's amendment been offered a few days ago there would have been time to have got the opinion of the rest of the lawyers, as well as the able judgment of the two honourable senators from Toronto.

I do not think I have ever been guilty of pressing legislation through, but it seems to me that the time has come when honourable senators know enough about this legislation to make up their minds one way or the other. Personally, I think the legislation should pass as it now stands, but I am content to abide by the decision of the house. I do not think anything will be gained by delaying further.

Hon. Mr. Euler: There is an old saying, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." We have had some eloquent speeches by lawyers; but what I have heard from the honourable senator from Toronto (Hon. Mr. Campbell) does not convey any great compliment to the lawyers, whether in this house or elsewhere, who are responsible for this bill, for it appears that they have been unable either to draft a satisfactory clause or to agree on the meaning of what they have drafted. That, it seems to me, is a reflection upon the legal profession.

Mr. Knowles, whom I do not know, says this this section may mean something which the minister himself says he does not intend it to mean. Perhaps my honourable friend is blameworthy for having introduced this amendment at so late a date, for apparently it can be interpreted as likely to work to the distinct disadvantage of the province from which we both come. Surely, if there are these differences of opinion, it should be possible for members of the learned profession of the law to draft the section in language which will make its meaning unmistakable. As matters are, there is a difference of opinion. Why leave it at that? I do not want to differ from the leader of the government (Hon. Mr. Robertson), but I cannot see why we should not make use of the man whom we pay to give us opinions on the