

*Transportation*

of reference are statutory powers, and while it is possible under the amendment for the house to add to these terms of reference, there are certain terms of reference imposed upon the committee without needing to wait for the government to suggest these to the committee, nor need we wait for the government to establish the committee.

There is the right to take evidence in camera. There may be hon. members who take exception to this, but after listening for a number of years to evidence before the sessional committee which has dealt with the national railway and national air line, and after reading the transcript of the proceedings taken before the standing committee, it is quite obvious that there are and will be a great many instances where people in order to establish a point, do not feel free to expose in public the details of information which they have every reason to feel should be kept confidential.

True enough, I assume the transport commission will have the right to hear all evidence, and the people who appear before that commission in order to make a case will give all evidence, whether in camera or publicly, but I think the committee should have this option. This is a concept which might well be applicable to other corporations. I am thinking of the C.B.C. and the problems which are going to be faced by the government and the house shortly as to how to deal with the C.B.C.

I feel a small committee of this kind, established under statute and its powers given under statute, will be able to exercise the type of watchdog function which is going to be essential if this parliament, composed of the representatives of the people, is going to retain some measure, not of control, not, I suggest, as an appellate tribunal, but simply the power to see what is happening; the power to see the impact and the effect of the regulations and functions which this transport commission is going to exercise.

It may be suggested, why not leave this to the standing committee? As I said, I read the evidence given before the standing committee. I think it did a tremendously important job. Its functions were exercised to the fullest. I think the chairman and the members of the committee are entitled, as I said before, to the gratitude of the house for the way in which they performed. But this standing committee will be seized, as usual, with the jurisdiction in connection with examining the estimates of

all the various crown corporations and different bodies, and generally will be dealing with the whole question of transportation. Of course, the estimates of the Department of Transport will be before the standing committee. It will, of course, deal with legislation and it will, no doubt, be exercising some jurisdiction over what was formerly done by the sessional committee examining into the C.N.R. and Air Canada.

I suggest that a body of the kind I envisage will be competent to do what must be done if parliament, and this house in particular, is not to surrender the authority which I suggest it should continue to have within its four corners. By examining the report it will have the right to look at any of the operations of the transport commission.

Surely, there is a need to have parliament clothed with a method to bring to the attention of the commission, the government, and the public, the actual effect of the proposals and actions of the commission. In my judgment, the lines of communication from people to their members provide the best means of relaying to this committee, and thence to the commission, the knowledge, the interest, and the inquiries which will be provoked throughout the country.

In my view, Mr. Chairman, it is going to be many, many years before the actions of this committee will have had their impact, before we will be able to see precisely what is happening. It will be many years before we will know the effect of the regulations and orders made by the transport commission in respect of the number of diverse subject matters which have been assigned to it.

I suggest, therefore, the establishment of this committee is the most effective means presented to the House of Commons whereby we can continue in a proper way our right to evaluate, to examine, to criticize, and to suggest.

I do not accept the proposition that parliament should be asked to abandon its responsibility in such a vast field of operations, and yield in a practical sense the powers and the authorities to the commission without a safeguard of some kind. I use the words "in a practical sense" because this, of course, is what this bill will do. The government may retort and say, "We have always the power to legislate." But, Mr. Chairman, we have given this tremendous authority over these various fields to the commission, and I am quite sure the commission will continue to be seized of them without too much change for a number

[Mr. Baldwin.]