

Transportation

Centre said, our parliamentary process can also be praised. Perhaps the minister could take aside his colleague, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen), when the latter returns from his wanderings and preaching outside the house about activities here, to tell him that there are some things in the parliamentary process which are working.

With reference to the amendments to the bill which have been mentioned by other speakers let me say that I was amazed at their number. I do not know how many there were but there must have been well over a hundred. It seemed to me that the minister had an amendment for everybody who made a speech and the tougher the speech the bigger the amendment was. Nevertheless, not all of this is bad.

Reference has been made to the reporting of this debate by the news media. I agree with what has been said. I think that the newspapers in the maritimes and western Canada rose to the occasion after their interest was provoked and did their job well but the national newspapers in central Canada, which are now being sold in the extremities of the country and are bragging about their great influence and position in Canadian affairs, should smarten up. They have not devoted much time or space to this important subject and the reason for this can only be that either they are too lazy or too busy to write about this legislation which is so beneficial to central Canada or they are embarrassed even to mention it. I am not enthusiastic about the manner in which they have reported this subject which is of national importance. If mention is made of "bunny girls" in parliament, word is flashed across the country and headlines are made, but if a speech is made about a serious matter, something with which we will have to live for the next 50 years, our friends in the press gallery say that there is no news value in it.

Having said that I will now make quick reference to four points. So far as the 17-man transport commission is concerned, we are in favour of it. As many of our members have said, it is a big board. We are worried about its bureaucratic nature but we hope it will simplify the methods of dealing with our transportation problems.

● (3:10 p.m.)

The minister made a great case of the amendment moved last night by the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson), with reference to the minister employing experts

to attend commission hearings on his behalf. I do not think this is a very important matter; to me it is of minor significance. I believe that the minister would have done so anyway whether or not it was provided for in the bill. I also think he is trying to imply that the government and the cabinet are removed from the commission. But, Mr. Speaker, there will still be politics involved in the transportation commission. We cannot divorce it from politics and I am not sure that we should. I was one who favoured this watchdog amendment that was brought forward, but one of the worries I had was that it attempted to take politics out of transportation, and you cannot do that. I am not talking only of party politics but also of regional politics. The minister has made speeches about this question and I think he knows what I mean.

We are in favour of this commission, Mr. Speaker, and hope that it will do a good job. We have confidence in the members of the commission. We do not think that they needed all the directions that we gave them, but some of the words we inserted in different clauses will be of help to them and will give them an idea of the way we were thinking.

Second, may I say that I feel that not enough attention was given to the brief which was submitted by the representatives of the province of Manitoba. It was an excellent brief and I hope it will be remembered by those interested in transportation for years to come. It was a massive brief; it was thorough and in my opinion all-Canadian. It dealt with the position of the maritimes, the west, the early days of our history and the obligations which were incurred when promises were made under confederation.

One of the things which impressed me about it and which I looked up again this morning was that the brief pointed out that the old seaway canal system which was constructed early in our history was valued in those days at a sum in the vicinity of \$250 million. When the \$300 million-odd spent on the St. Lawrence seaway is added this means that over \$500 million has been invested in the waterways system of central Canada. This indicates, of course, that transportation is not all one-sided; it does not have to be paid for in that instance too.

The Crow rates have been mentioned and I cannot improve upon what has been said about them. Hon. members have chided the minister in his humiliation and have said they hope he has learned his lesson. I can only say that I have always been aware of the importance of the Crow rates to western Canada.