

Transportation

Mr. Macaluso: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member for Mercier has been making a great many speeches out west about transportation, but since they have nothing to do with the national transportation bill which is before us at the moment, I will leave that matter to a later date.

Mr. Southam: Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank the members of the committee for this opportunity to avail myself of a few moments of the committee's time in the discussion on clause 1 of Bill No. C-231, an act to define and implement a national transportation policy for Canada. The hon. member for Hamilton West has put the committee in a very good mood and has named so many of the hard working members of the standing committee. I wish to thank him personally for his kind reference to myself, the hon. member for Moose Jaw, the hon. member for Kindersley and other hon. members whom he mentioned. But in making this passing reference we should not overlook the chairman of the committee, the hon. member for Hamilton West himself.

As the hon. member pointed out, this bill was one of the most important, most contentious and contained some of the biggest problems, I think, of any bill ever presented to a committee of the house. His guidance and perseverance, together with the assistance of the vice-chairman, I believe went a long way in facilitating the progress we had already made in passing the bill.

The hon. member overlooked other very capable members besides members of his own party, who also made contributions to the work of the committee. I think I should single out for particular mention the hon. member for Acadia. I feel that he is a man who has spent more time on and done more research into the problems of transportation, and has made, I believe, a greater contribution toward the passage of this bill, than any other individual in the house.

In saying that, we should not forget the chairman of our group, the hon. member for Saint John-Albert, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, the hon. member for Pictou, the hon. member for Wellington-Huron and, of course, the minister himself. It was appreciated by the members of the committee that, although he had problems in dealing with much of the testimony presented to the committee, the minister was on the job day after day doing everything he could to assist us in carrying out a proper study toward the development of this bill. It was

[Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert).]

because of the co-operation of the minister that many contentious points were made capable of solution, and it was helpful when he agreed to accept amendments made by the members. In this way we were able to make the progress we did.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, there is the usual "but". Personally I feel, as a member from western Canada, that this is not yet a good bill. After all, we have been working on a piecemeal basis on transportation legislation since back in 1898. We have been bringing forward and developing certain modes of transportation and have developed, as I say, a sort of piecemeal type of program in Canada. Naturally, it is very difficult to take one encompassing piece of legislation such as Bill No. C-231 and expect it to bring us up to date completely, and be a perfect product in the end result. I think evidence of this fact is what transpired during the course of our committee study. In the committee something like 50 or 60 amendments were put forward by witnesses. We had to contend with those. The fact that there were so many amendments is evidence that it was not a good bill to start with.

I have not been able to keep track of the number of amendments placed before this committee of the whole. They have all been important; they have all been well debated. There is an indication that many more amendments may be introduced before this bill comes finally to the point of what I think is necessary in order to achieve a modern system of transportation in Canada.

• (9:40 p.m.)

I am disturbed about the complete transfer of principle or concept from the old transport board to the new commission, so far as rate setting is concerned. It would appear as though the minister was rather cosy with the railroads in drafting this legislation. I have heard remarks to this effect. In fact, I am just wondering whether the minister, instead of aspiring to the Senate some time in the future, may be thinking of becoming president of the Canadian National.

In other words, Mr. Chairman, I do not believe all modes of transport have received adequate debate or consideration in this bill. I am thinking of transport by air. Here is a developing mode of transport that has grown up, almost like Topsy, in recent years. I believe the competitive principle should be applied to this mode of transport rather than to rail rates.