

*Restraint of Government Expenditures*

might have sounded partisan. But I am not partisan; I like to regard myself as being fair-minded.

**Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, I know there will not be much publicity given to anything I have to say today on Bill C-19, or anything else for that matter, since the news on everybody's mind comes from the province of Quebec. I have been watching the faces of members opposite this morning, as I did last night. They are asking themselves: What happened? In discussing the bill before us, I shall attempt to put forward some ideas hon. members may wish to consider even though they are very few in number over there. I can understand that; the shock to them must be unbelievable.

I intend to show how bills such as C-19 which are so often slipped through the House after a discussion directed to details, such as we have heard this morning, often contain principles of great substance, principles which are somehow lost sight of. If hon. members would read the speech which the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) made last Wednesday, and then read the maiden speech of the new member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), I believe they would better understand the significance and the danger of this type of posturing bill. The measure before us is in several parts, but the part which draws my attention—I hope it will draw the attention of all Canadians who believe in one Canada—is clause 15 which simply repeals section 272 of the Railway Act. Mr. Speaker, that clause is a direct attack on the very foundation of the federal system.

Every schoolchild, when they used to teach history in schools, learned that our country became a country because the various colonies across the eastern part of this part of the continent did not want to become absorbed into the country to the south, the United States, and the only way in which it was possible to tie those colonies together in an economic as well as political unity was through the provision of transportation. Those of us who know the history of our country in that early period understand the importance of the intercolonial railway system in bringing those eastern colonies into touch with central Canada and each other. That railway system was the tie which brought those six colonies together: admittedly, Newfoundland did not come in until much later, but that was the tie. Those of us who come from the west and know the history of that part of the country are aware that it was the decision of the government of the day to build a railroad which was uneconomic, marginal and difficult to construct, which brought the four western provinces into confederation.

Any person who is familiar with these Parliament Buildings knows that the largest committee room in the place is the railway committee room. Every member of parliament who comes here should walk into that room, look around in silence, and ask himself why they chose so large a room to be the railway committee room. It was because transportation is the very foundation of this country. That is why the railway committee room is so large. For the great bulk of our history it was the most used room in this entire building. It has not been used very much in recent years because the government has

[Mr. Railton.]

forgotten that Canadian history has been largely concerned with bringing great regions, far from the centre, into one Canada, one nation.

Those words are not just an empty slogan, Mr. Speaker; they are the basis of our political thought, the philosophy which makes the economics of this nation viable. Yet we find in the bill before us, a bill which professes to deal with the saving of money, an attack on the very foundation of our unity. There are, of course, other expressions of the same philosophy, for example, the St. Lawrence Seaway in more recent days. Though it is hardly ever mentioned in the House, the building of that seaway was an effort to make it easier for goods from the eastern part of the country to reach the central regions. For years no one has mentioned the fact that for the great northern regions of Quebec and Ontario and the northern parts of the four western provinces, together with the Yukon and the Arctic Islands, transportation was the key. The people of Canada as a whole have paid, without question, for this northern transportation system. We are still doing that, and I hope will continue to do so.

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If we are to hold this country together, it must be recognized by our political leaders in the federal government and each province that transportation and communications are the key. That is how our federal system developed. The key to making the system work was the recognition that wherever one lived, wherever areas were opened up, there would be equal treatment. Basically, Mr. Speaker, it is transportation inequity that forces the westerner to be alienated from the central part of this country. Basically, it is transportation inequity that forces the Atlantic provinces to feel forgotten. Basically, it is transportation inequity and remoteness from communication which make our northern people so hostile to those of us who live in the south. We have built this nation by recognizing that if we want political union, one Canada, we must have economic union. The key to this is transportation, along with harbours, docks, search and rescue and all the other facilities. This has been our history, and it will be our history for many decades to come.

The attack on federalism by the government in this bill, using the excuse of saving money, is not an isolated one. In the last three years, just think of the attacks we have had in this House on the part of the government on the basic foundations of our federal system. No matter what kind of scare campaign you run, Mr. Speaker, you cannot get away from the fact that there is the belief in the minds of the people that this principle which builds our country and makes it strong is being forgotten. Let me give the House an example or two of what makes this seem so devilish. Just three years ago the government introduced the petroleum administration bill which was a direct attack on the wealth of the provinces. The government said that because it represented all the people, it had the right to break the constitution and take ownership and control of the resources in the provinces of this country. I opposed the petroleum administration bill, as did all my colleagues.