

*Transportation*

but to providing guarantees that there shall be no further erosions of such rights through blanket or any other type of increases in the freight tolls.

● (8:00 p.m.)

In the light of the sacrifices which the maritime provinces have made toward maintaining the Canadian confederation in other ways, neither the government nor parliament should lose sight of such facts.

The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) indicated a short while ago that we have a guarantee in the legislation that there will be absolutely no alteration in our rates for the next two years. For this, we are very thankful. I am sure that the fact the minister comes from the Atlantic area had a good deal to do with the recognition that fears must be allayed in the Atlantic provinces that the rights we have now will not be eroded in any way. I say to you, sir, there is another aspect which I should like to have the minister consider. It is the fact that if the government believes the Maritime Freight Rates Act is a fair act, a realistic act, in the development of a national transportation policy, should there not be the same consideration given to the Atlantic provinces in relation to other forms of transportation? I mention especially air transport and pipe lines which, for the first time, will be coming under the national act, as well as road transportation which we might as well admit has been a provincial responsibility up to the moment.

I believe that if the philosophy behind the Maritime Freight Rates Act is accepted by the government, then the government should indicate in this legislation, which to the best of my knowledge it has not done, that similar consideration will be available to the Atlantic provinces in these other fields, that similar recognition will be coming forward to the Atlantic provinces in connection with other forms of transportation. One result of such consideration may be that we would be able to progress at a much faster rate than is in evidence at the present time. Since I have been in this house, it has been obvious that transportation problems are at the core of many of our economic problems. It is in this field that we spend most of our time in our debates in this chamber.

I should like to mention only two or three examples. In Nova Scotia there is a good deal of discussion concerning the establishment of a second ferry between that province and the New England states. There is money being expended at the moment on the building of a causeway between New Brunswick and

[Mr. Coates.]

Prince Edward Island to form a more satisfactory link and to make the products of Prince Edward Island more accessible to the remainder of Canada. In New Brunswick, as well as in Nova Scotia, there is a good deal of discussion about the building of a road through the state of Maine, so that we would have greater access to the markets of central Canada, or Ontario and Quebec, if you would rather have the area described that way, since people in those parts of Canada do not appear to like being told they are from central Canada.

Our problems are basic, and harken back to the problems of transportation, the getting of our goods to markets at the cheapest possible rate. We have a new conception determined by the MacPherson royal commission, and put into legislation on two occasions by this government. The legislation is so complicated that it takes more than a week for a layman to understand it. The government however is asking us to give approval to the principle of this legislation before we really have a good understanding of what the legislation will do for us or to us. It is the latter part that we in the maritimes fear more than anything else. I mentioned earlier the Maritime Freight Rates Act, and the assurance was given by the minister that nothing would be done for a period of two years. This is very specifically set out in the legislation. However, we have no assurance about what is going to happen after the two-year period. In the maritime provinces, we feel a little leery about leaving it up to this 17-man board to make the decision on their own after this two-year period.

I would think a satisfactory alternative would be to have the recommendations made when that study is completed brought back to parliament so that parliament may be able to make the decision about what should happen at the conclusion of those two years. I think we in the maritimes would be much happier if we thought, before any final decision was going to be made at the conclusion of the two years, that parliament would have an opportunity to hear from the members representing that area.

I refer to another section of the bill which will be of real concern unless some assurances are given by the government. I refer to what will be section 329A of the act and which deals with eastern rates as they are defined here for eastern ports. Since 1960 there has been a freeze on these rates. They are, and have been, of assistance in maintaining business at our eastern ports. We want