

work on it, and to bring about some action. This is what has to be done.

I see in this bill another avenue for the government to delay implementing those measures in the transportation field that have been promised for so long to the Atlantic provinces. In his speech the minister reviewed the history that is necessary to explain this legislation. His was a straightforward review.

I want to refer to one matter the minister did not go into which I think is pertinent. He did not mention the reason that we got into the problem respecting the freeze on freight rates. When the National Transportation Act was being considered many of us thought that was the proper time to provide for the extension of the freeze on maritime freight rates. This whole subject is a complicated matter. It includes the old roll-back, something I shall not even try to explain, and I hasten to add that I doubt that I could. But in any event a permanent extension was not included in that act.

At that time members of the Transport Committee were faced with the choice of writing the freight rate freeze into permanent form or covering it with a clause extending it for two years. The committee was divided. Some of us felt we should include it permanently so that it never could be taken away from us no matter what happened. Others felt that the freeze should be extended for two years, and that when the two year period had expired the pressure would be so great on the government it would have to bring in long-term legislation covering transport in the Atlantic provinces.

The two years were up in March. Nothing was done. I know it is not easy to come forward with comprehensive legislation of this nature on which there is very little agreement, even in the Atlantic provinces. But I repeat that nothing was done. We were stalled. Then Bill C-182 was introduced. I am not criticizing the new minister in this regard. I am just making the case that this is the old stalling technique in the form of temporary legislation.

From a quick glance at the bill I detect that the freeze on the rates will expire within a year from last March. We do not know whether the freeze will then be necessary as a result of this legislation and changing circumstances. But I know that the pressure we put on the government of the day to act on a comprehensive review of the situation will

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have been lost, and it could be that the stalling and the failure to act will go on for many more years.

This concerns me greatly, and I hope the minister will explain the situation. I hope he will even tell me I am wrong. I have objections to other provisions in the bill, and here I refer to the argument about the power given to the Governor in Council. But my main objection is that once the freeze expires we will have lost the pressure that we had on the government. It was an insurmountable pressure. The government discovered it to be so in March and realized it had to take temporary action. But it could be that we will all have long grey beards before we get the permanent legislation that will mean so much to the Atlantic provinces.

**Mr. McGrath:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to express my reservations about the procedure that has been followed during the course of this debate. When this bill was first introduced a few days ago its introduction was coincidental with a meeting of the Transport Committee. Granted the house was on early sitting hours, but the fact remains that somebody must be at fault. If it is not the Minister of Transport then it is the government house leader or the government whip. Someone should have taken precautions to see that this legislation did not come before the house when the Transport Committee was meeting or the meeting of the committee should have been rescheduled, because we find ourselves in the ridiculous position of discussing this important bill at the same time that the Transport Committee is meeting in the West Block.

Since this is the first transport bill that the new minister is piloting through the house, perhaps he will heed the comments that were made by my hon. friend from Saint John-Lancaster and by the hon. member for Moose Jaw. The minister knows that veteran members of the Transport Committee travelled through the Atlantic provinces to study the problem of transportation in that region and spent many hours attending numerous meetings of the committee. Out of respect to their work he should see to it that whenever he has a bill concerning transport before the house he takes the precautionary step of ensuring that the Transport Committee is not sitting that day.

• (11:20 a.m.)

It is interesting, and I think the record should show, that the house has before it at the present time in the form of government