

Transportation

Mr. Nugent: I can understand the purpose of the review procedure as explained by the minister, but I feel that this procedure could be put to better purpose if used more broadly. I have in mind certain problems that have arisen from time to time. I am thinking particularly of the Air Transport Board and its dealing with northern transportation areas. Its duty to provide good air transport service for Canada was sometimes lost sight of because of the vehicle that it chose as the best insurance that good transport service should be available, and in certain cases that board decided to restrict competition in order to make sure that there should be a good economic return for the operator chosen, from which he could provide good equipment and service.

On occasions when I was struggling with the Air Transport Board, trying to get an improvement in service, or especially an innovation in the service, I found that the board had taken the interests of the operator so much to heart, and was so intent on making sure that competition should be restricted, that sometimes it forgot that providing air service was really its number 1 purpose, and that restricting competition, thus making the existing service profitable for the operator, was only secondary to that first aim.

● (9:30 p.m.)

It seems to me that if the decisions are going to be made by a committee of the commission which operates in the same manner as committees of the Air Transport Board have operated, the committee will become air oriented and may put the public interest and imaginative air expansion in a position secondary to the well-being of the country. The government has missed an opportunity by not giving municipalities, provinces and interested groups of citizens in certain areas being served the opportunity of asking for a review by the commission, in the hope that the whole commission, not being air or railway orientated, would think in terms of providing a little more imaginative service to the country. In this way the commission could look at the situation from a point of view concerned less with the financial well-being or health of an air carrier operating in an area. The commission would therefore realize the needs of a community or a district to be served, and make things a little more tough in respect of the type of services that should be provided if a carrier is to continue to operate.

If my proposal was accepted I think the public interest would be put first and the well-being of the carrier would be considered

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

second. This might give an impetus to the provision or innovation of better service. It is my submission that a committee which deals exclusively with a specific type of carrier, as committees of the Air Transport Board have done, would become over-solicitous about the welfare of a carrier, to the extent that it would be slow to allow any new ideas or any new competition which might provide the service needed to meet new demands. We must have imaginative services which will help open up new areas and create new business. This would not only permit competition but would help the country become financially healthy.

When the government is reconsidering the drafting of this clause, I hope it will seriously consider what happened in the past and make provision for a general review procedure under clause 5 on the application of those who are permitted to intervene. The public point of view could then be considered as a last step before an order became official, without the necessity of an appeal to the minister.

If that suggestion has been considered and rejected, I hope the minister will explain why it has been rejected. Perhaps it is cumbersome but I believe that bodies such as the Air Transport Board tend to look after their own affairs rather than take into consideration the changing needs of this country for a more viable transportation system.

Mr. Pickersgill: If we can agree to stand the clause I should like to give the suggestion some consideration before making a reply. Perhaps hon. members would agree to stand clause 17 and go on to a consideration of clause 18.

The Chairman: Does the committee agree to stand clause 17.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.
Clause 17 stands.

On clause 18—*Appeal*.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, my remarks in respect of this particular clause are directed to the minister. In reading subclauses 1 and 2 it is apparent that any applicant who is refused a licence by the board under the Aeronautics Act, a motor vehicle undertaking or a certificate of public convenience and necessity can appeal to the minister.

This clause states that after an appeal to the minister he shall thereupon certify his opinion to the commission, and the commission shall comply therewith. In this regard