

*Transportation*

but I do feel that all members of the committee will understand why I have singled out these three members of the committee.

● (9:30 p.m.)

I think all members of the committee were deeply appreciative of the attendance of the Minister of Transport at our meetings. It helped us expedite consideration of the briefs and the passage of the bill through committee. When the minister was not able to attend a committee meeting, the Minister without Portfolio, the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George, was there. This was of great assistance to the standing committee and perhaps should be an example followed by other ministers.

I would be remiss if I did not convey the thanks of the committee to the deputy minister of transport and the officials who were present at our meetings. The deputy minister and his officials were of great help to the minister. They were available at every meeting to assist hon. members with regard to questions that they asked, and in preparing amendments and summaries of briefs for the assistance of members of the committee. They helped in preparing in a very informative and summary manner amendments that were considered in relation to Bill C-231, which was of great assistance to the members of the committee in their work. On behalf of all members of the committee I want to thank the deputy minister and the officials of the Department of Transport for the work they did in assisting us in our consideration of this bill.

Members from all sides of the house were co-operative in considering a bill of vital importance to the national interest, a bill that had been talked about for many years and which was the subject of at least two royal commissions, the Turgeon commission and the MacPherson commission. Our meetings showed that the members were knowledgeable in this subject, had done their homework and had read and considered all the briefs presented to the committee. They also showed they were knowledgeable in the questioning of the witnesses who appeared before the committee. They showed that they knew what they were talking about. I would suggest that on many occasions the witnesses were somewhat surprised at the questions asked by the members of the committee, and were at times taken aback in answering some of them, because I believe the committee members showed that sometimes they knew more than the witness about the subject in question.

All the briefs were carefully considered. I want to thank the Minister of Transport and the government in this respect, because it showed that the department and the minister were not inflexible in receiving suggestions from those who presented briefs. I think all members will agree with me that a great many amendments put forward in committee were made as a result of briefs presented by individuals, provincial governments and companies that appeared before the committee. I believe this helped many of us in our consideration of the bill and showed us the importance of inflexibility in regard to a bill that was in the national interest, and would mean that once and for all Canada would have a national transportation policy.

I also believe our experience in the committee showed up some of the weaknesses of the standing committee structure. Our committee retained an eminent economist, Dr. Armstrong, who had worked on the MacPherson royal commission. Perhaps other committees, and especially those dealing with important legislation, should be allowed to obtain the expertise of counsel and economists in order to deal more effectively with these matters. Committees should have available expert counsel and economists who are knowledgeable in the subject with which they are dealing. This would help our committees a great deal.

I would also like to thank the vice-chairman of the committee who, when the chairman was not able to attend on a few occasions, took his place at the meetings. I think all members of the committee deserve a vote of thanks from the house as a whole for the diligent work they performed in consideration of this bill and the briefs presented to us. I think we now have a very good base from which to move forward as far as a transportation policy is concerned. I will not take up the time of the committee to deal with the different aspects of transportation. Many hon. members of this house have done so already. I just want again to express my deep appreciation to all members of the committee for the courtesy they showed me and for the very kind words many of them had for me.

**Mr. Bell (Saint John-Albert):** Mr. Chairman, could I ask the hon. member a question? I realize that we are pressed for time. I also realize that the hon. member could not deal with everybody, but does he not think he should mention those great speeches made out west by the hon. member for Mercier on behalf of Expo?