

Transportation

fellows who will probably button their lips for another few months. However, sooner or later they will rise and demand that the minister explain to them what their future will be.

● (7:50 p.m.)

This legislation has been promised to them for years. Now we have it and there is nothing in it. There can only be dismay, discouragement, bewilderment and wonderment over what the government is attempting to do. This is a broad and sweeping bill which deals mainly with railways. But railways are not the only communication media in Canada; these thoughts are very real in the minds of the regional air carriers, and they will bring those thoughts forward forcibly.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion again may I urge the minister to give assurances and to spell out in clearly defined terms that the maritime shippers and the maritime industry will not suffer and will not be put at a disadvantage once this bill becomes law, and at the conclusion of the two-year freeze period.

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland): Mr. Speaker, one has only to peruse Bill C-231 in order to arrive at the conclusion that a great many more questions arise from it than there are answers contained in it. It has been indicated in the debate today by a number of hon. members who have studied the bill and endeavoured to inform themselves to the best of their ability that they are left with a very significant question in their mind regarding their approach to this bill on second reading. It would be much simpler if the government were to refer the bill for study in the standing committee and allowed the experts in these various fields to appear before the committee, to enunciate their criticisms and express their views on how this bill can be improved,—if indeed it can be improved; some may believe it is perfect as it is. This would place members of this house in a better position to arrive at an informed conclusion on the bill. If the government forces hon. members to arrive at a definite conclusion without proper evidence being made available to them, it will place them in a difficult position.

I hope the government will not endeavour to get this bill through second reading before the standing committee has had time to consider the broad general philosophy behind it. If we are to leave shortly for the remainder of the recess with a clear understanding of what will happen in regard to a national

transportation policy, then we should first send this bill to a committee for thorough consideration. I do not think that even if we spent the whole of this week debating this bill in its present form we would find ourselves in a position to make an educated estimation of its value. I hope the government will consider sending the bill to the standing committee before it obtains second reading.

I would now like to turn to some of the general questions which have arisen in my mind as a result of studying this legislation to the best of my ability in the short period of time available to me. First of all, transportation has always been of main concern in this country because our economy has evolved our trade patterns from east to west rather than from north to south. We in the maritimes or the Atlantic area are well aware of the complexities that will face us when this legislation is adopted.

The Maritime Freight Rates Act has dealt with the inequities in transportation which have developed between the maritimes and the central part of our nation. This act has been used to develop the philosophy of east-west transportation and to try to equalize transportation charges which must be borne by the people no matter where they live. The government is fully aware of the fears of the people of the maritime provinces regarding freight rates. I need only quote portions of an editorial which appeared in the *Moncton Daily Times* and which reads as follows:

The new legislation enunciates manifold changes, among these some of marked significance in what has heretofore been long observed transportation rules and regulations governing not only the railways but steamship and other shipping operations, and the air lines. The three federal regulatory bodies which have jurisdiction over the respective phases of the nation's transport—Board of Transport Commissioners, Canadian Maritime Commission, and Air Transport Board—are planned for consolidation into a single agency to be known as the Canadian Transport Commission. This body will have seventeen members.

Inasmuch as it is proposed to afford the railways greater measures of freedom from the presently governing rules and regulations, the Atlantic provinces in particular have especial interest in that important aspect of freight rate making. One of the proposed freedoms is that the railways will have more power in adjusting their freight charges to make these, where considered necessary, more compensatory.

In the consideration of this new legislation and in that part of it relating to the terms of the Maritime Freight Rates Act, the members of parliament from the Atlantic provinces must hold the government not only to preserving the rights given this seaboard region by the Maritime Freight Rates Act