

Aeronautics Act

the amendment. Without it there is no opportunity for the House of Commons to hold the minister responsible. Without it how can anyone with respect for honesty and truth claim that we have a system of ministerial responsibility? We cannot have that unless there is some mechanism to effect it, and that is all the amendment does. It merely provides that if 20 or more members of the House of Commons deem it appropriate, the minister can be required to explain the impact of his regulations, can be required to justify his regulations and submit the matter to a vote of a committee of the House.

As I have indicated, the people in this country who look beyond the short-term horizons in terms of our democratic system must be and indeed are—judging by the reaction that I am getting, as I am sure others are—very concerned about the direction in which the country is taking our democratic institutions. Year after year the role of parliament and the role of the representatives of the people is diminished. More and more authority becomes concentrated in the ministries. Senior civil servants and individuals as knowledgeable as Simon Reisman, a former deputy minister of finance, have seen this happening. He recently indicated that governments today are involved in more and more things in more and more ways, and doing things badly, acknowledging that the amount of authority that is concentrated within the upper levels of the bureaucracy, such as organizations like the Privy Council office and so on is horrendous. Indeed, I do not think there is another country in the world that has less democratic control over the state than Canada—that is, no country that claims to be a democracy.

● (1522)

So I would beseech the minister and the government as well as members opposite to look again at this minor amendment. It will not reduce the ability of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) or his successors to manage the operation of that department, to introduce regulations for the benefit of the safety of the public and so on. This amendment will merely provide a small opportunity in a real way for the exercise of democratic ministerial responsibility. If there is some feeling for our system, some concern that a democracy must be maintained in this country in fact as well as in form, I am sure members opposite will find it easy to vote for this amendment and bring it into law and thereby improve this legislation significantly.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am the seconder of the motion in the name of the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) which is the subject matter of debate in the House this afternoon. As such, I think I should say something with respect to this amendment. As my friend the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre) has said, it is designed primarily to bring back into parliament something which has been lost in terms of the legislative process and control over the processes of government. Like the hon. member for Calgary Centre, I find people saying that that has occurred. Studious observers of the parliamentary system have indicated they are alarmed by the tendency to move to a

[Mr. Andre.]

greater degree toward the use of regulations and guidelines rather than statute law which is passed openly in parliament.

I agree completely with those who have said that government cannot be fettered and that it is impossible in a complex age for everything to be set forth in statute form. It is equally possible and equally with precedent in this House of Commons to ensure that parliament at some time has at least the occasion to pass judgment on regulations, and that is the precise purpose of this amendment. It does not say that parliament must make a judgment in terms of a vote or that parliament must waste time debating the regulations. It merely says that if parliament is moved by the substance or the direction of legislation by regulation, or legislation by order in council, then parliament will be given this opportunity to consider it.

I say, sir, it is not without precedent for a very good reason. My recollection indicates that in the recent bill establishing the Anti-Inflation Board, which is within the life of this parliament, the right of referral to parliament for a second look was given in that bill. Also, in the recently passed legislation dealing with the northern pipeline, there was established by a rule change in our House a committee on which the duty was placed of overseeing the construction in the interests of Canada and to report to parliament. If my recollection serves me correctly, there was also some legislation affecting petroleum administration in this country which called for a review, for a look back at the legislation to see how it is functioning. I suggest those precedents are within the limitations of this very simple and direct amendment moved by my colleague from Vegreville.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Raines) was in the House a few moments ago. I watched him on a local television program the other evening. The member for Burnaby-Seymour recently announced that he will not be contesting the next election. He said that he was frustrated generally with the life of a member of parliament. He made no reference to it in terms of his work on behalf of his constituents. He said that he enjoyed that work. He was not complaining about the travelling which is so necessary when one is a member from British Columbia and must go back and forth each week. This is a tremendous burden that a member bears. But that was not worrying him. What was troubling him was that parliament has lost touch somehow or other with the legislative process and its execution; that the processes of our parliament were not in tune with the necessities of the twentieth century. I believe this was the phrase he used, if I understood him correctly.

What has happened in the twentieth century is that we have moved to legislation by order in council to a great degree. In fact, more and more it is being done that way, and parliament is getting out of touch with such a legislative process. Even if the public servants who make the regulations are well intentioned, and I think most of them are, they are not elected and they are not responsible in the sense that a member of parliament is. There is no great opportunity for the public servants of the country to obtain feedback from the nation as to the