

*Interprovincial Transportation*

**Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot):** Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this notice of motion I should like to congratulate the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Hurlburt) on a very knowledgeable speech on transportation in Canada and on the trucking industry in particular. It was a speech this House sorely needed. He delivered it well and appeared to know a good deal about the subject.

I was interested in the remarks of the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Guay). He acknowledged there was a problem but tried to become political and backed away from proposing a solution. In the course of some political manoeuvres he blamed us on this side for not having found a remedy. It is true the Conservative party was in power from 1957 to 1963. I apologize and express regret that we could not create a Utopia in every situation during that period. We tried, but we were not able to cover this particular area.

Why was this the case? Many hon. members have drawn attention to the difficulties caused by the British North America Act and the great need which exists for its revision. In 1954, this parliament passed the Motor Vehicle Transport Act which in essence ran contrary to the British North America Act. Looking back, it is easy to see which one was the best. The Supreme Court ruling that interprovincial trucking was the responsibility of the federal government was certainly a correct one; it is only right we should exercise jurisdiction over the delivery of food and other commodities across Canada.

The spokesman for the New Democratic Party talked about regulations affecting the trucking industry in recent years—regulations sanctioned by this House with regard to hours of work, and so on. These have greatly increased the cost of trucking but I am sure the NDP will support them. That is why I asked the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) whether he was announcing government policy or his own. Certainly the regulations we have imposed upon the trucking industry have made a contribution to the higher cost of the transportation of agricultural produce in this country. I notice the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) is in her place and I point this out to her. Certainly it is more difficult to get New Brunswick potatoes into other parts of Canada than it is to get them into the United States. It is difficult to get Alberta cattle into the feed lots in Ontario.

In my opinion, the Motor Vehicle Transport Act passed in 1954 was put forward by a government bereft of ideas and anticipating its inevitable death, death which finally took place in 1957. An administration bereft of ideas merely shelved the problem and passed the burden on to the provinces. What was the difference between conditions in Canada then and now? For the benefit of the hon. member for St. Boniface, let me say that we had a different transportation act. No major change could be made without the minister's approval. Today we have a transportation act, passed in 1967, which more or less takes the minister and the government out of the regulatory field connected with the transportation system. Hon. members will recall that every now and then in recent years the Minister of Transport has risen in this House to say that he will pass a message to the Canadian Transport Commission, but that there is little he can do because he has no authority; the CTC is the final authority.

[Mr. Peters.]

In the old days, freight rates were rigidly controlled. In fact, under the government of my right hon. friend from Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) freight rates were rolled back. We brought in the Freight Rates Reduction Act which rolled back freight rates to a large extent—froze them, in fact, for a number of years. What effect did this have on the trucking industry? It restricted the growth of interprovincial trucking because freight rates were so low that only the railways could haul goods at those charges.

Since that time the railways have been granted about 15 rate increases. The CTC has allowed rates to go sky high and we have seen a gigantic expansion of the trucking industry as it moves into competition with the railroads. I believe this is good for the country. The whole concept of the National Transportation Act was that the basis should be competition. In fact, the preamble to the act itself states that competition should be the theme. Competition cannot be the theme as long as part III of the National Transportation Act remains unproclaimed. It is not good enough for the government to say this is all in the hands of the CTC. It is not in the hands of the CTC.

Why has part III not been proclaimed? Part III relates specifically to the notice of motion which is before us; it deals specifically with the trucking industry. It has not been proclaimed because the provinces have not wanted to agree to it. We hear much talk about how fragile our national unity really is. Yes, it is really fragile because no province has demonstrated a desire to create the one economic community which was envisaged back in 1867. We envisaged, then, one single economic community. That is not the case today and the reason is outlined in the notice of motion we are debating. We do not have free movement of goods.

• (1650)

It is true that the railroads can run across provincial boundaries without even slowing up, and that Air Canada and CP Air fly across the country without paying any attention to boundary lines. However, the trucking industry, which is the only real competitor in respect of l.c.l. freight and perishable commodities, cannot compete with the other two modes of transportation because of the desire of the provinces not to reach agreement. Each province is selfishly guarding its own domain. Each province thinks that its portion is of greater importance than the whole of Canada. This is completely wrong.

I do not think the government has done enough to get the provinces together. Certainly part III of the act should be proclaimed. We are here in this House with a minority position and no one knows just how long this government will last. I am sure it wants to show a spirit of co-operation because of its position. The very least it should do is allow this whole matter to be sent to the committee on transportation. That committee could then hear evidence from the trucking industry, the provinces and, the people producing food for consumption in Canada such as representatives of the vegetable and livestock industry, in order to see whether an agreement could be reached in respect of standardization of load limits, vehicle height and licensing. This might provide a cheaper means of getting our commodities to market.