

National Transportation Act

• (4:20 p.m.)

Committee on Transport and Communications, I hope the government will move swiftly on that recommendation.

If the bill is intended to provide protection against railway companies moving into the Sept Îles area and operating trucks to the west of the Saguenay River system, I am against it. On the other hand, if it is trying to create a monopoly or near-monopoly in the area, my support for the bill becomes virtually unqualified. As I have said, it is the total transportation package that hon. members must be concerned about. We must make sure that all Canadians obtain the most efficient transportation service available.

Further, I should not like to see Canadian National Railways or, for that matter, any railway company tie up all modes of transport to Sept Îles—which as hon. members may know is not served by rail along the shore of the river—to the extent that a monopoly might be created which could disrupt efforts being made in the port of Halifax to develop an efficient container service. We cannot support too many container ports. This aspect of the matter worries me in view of our National Transportation Act. There is nothing in the act to prevent that happening. I am not saying that a single agency could do it, but that situation might develop.

On the other hand, I should hate to see this virtual monopoly being given to any railway company without there being recourse for redress by this House. The absence of such recourse would have a disastrous effect on the work being done at public expense in Halifax. It seems to me there is not room for two or three container ports. Speaking for myself, if the bill we are considering provides some protection against a so-called monopoly, that could be detrimental. I urge hon. members to consider having these and related questions referred to the committee, which should also look at the wide powers the National Transportation Act has with relation to modes of transport serving areas which constitute a captive market.

On these two grounds, and with these two minor qualifications, I support the bill. The first qualification is that we must accept transportation as a total package and not as something that can be separated into different modes. The other one is the detrimental effect it could have on other areas of Canada and the absence of control of the National Transportation Act if a single agency determined to move in this way. I congratulate the mover of the bill and urge that it be referred to the standing committee for further consideration.

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take part briefly in the debate on Bill C-25. I was particularly pleased to hear the hon. member who preceded me speak about the monopolistic attitude of the railway companies and other companies in Canada. As a member of the transport committee, I believe that our main purpose is to ensure that all Canadians are provided with the most effective and efficient transportation system. I am sure this is exactly what the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) meant. He is concerned about a monopoly being instituted in this country which will take over all forms of transportation.

I express some doubt about this bill. We must all realize it is too late and too little, in a general context, to be an effective measure at this time. All of us in the standing committee who visited the maritimes not long ago realized that truck transportation is included under the Maritime Freight Rates Act. I believe if we were to propose a bill at this time dealing with railways only, we would soon have to propose an amendment to the National Transportation Act to deal with trucking systems.

I am sure all those who feel we should keep this country united from east to west realize we must have an efficient trucking system. We are not really looking at the over-all monopoly end of it when we talk about allowing the railways into the trucking industry. The main concern of this House should be that we provide an efficient transportation system.

If the transportation users of this country are to receive the type of consideration they should, naturally we have to look at the entire transportation system. I am not sure of the words of the member who introduced Bill C-25 when he stated that the United States prohibited any form of competition in this field. In the explanatory note it is said that the purpose of the bill is to provide that no railways company receiving moneys from the government of Canada or any agency thereof may acquire interest or control in motor vehicles. I have not gone into the general field to the same extent as the hon. member, but I wonder whether some of the railway companies in the United States also have an interest in trucking concerns. I am not prepared to express an opinion on that matter.

If we are really concerned about railway companies receiving moneys from the federal