

Railway Act

Mr. Johnston: I am somewhat at a loss in starting to speak on this bill on this occasion because those of our Conservative friends who were members of the committee were so mild in their criticism today that I am beginning to be a little bit suspicious. I recall quite well the vehemence they displayed in the committee. Then I think of the chief representative of the Conservative party on that committee, the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra, and I remember that even in the house he is one of those silver tongued orators who could almost cut your throat—figuratively speaking, of course—while he is patting you on the back. I guess he has fallen into that practice because he is a lawyer but I would caution the committee not to put too much faith in the mild attitude he adopted in his first few words on the bill today.

I agree with some of the remarks of the hon. member for Vancouver South. He pointed out that the railways have a difficult problem. We all recognize that. There is not a member of this house or a province of Canada who does not agree that the railways will have to have sufficient revenue to maintain them in a solvent position, and that we need the railways for long hauls and probably will always need them. But the thing about which we in Alberta are concerned particularly—and Alberta is possibly more concerned than any other province over the passage of the bill—is that when the railways want increased revenue they should not get it all from Alberta. That is what we are concerned with, and that is the very point on which I want to caution the representatives of the Conservative party who were on that committee.

They say: "Oh yes, it is all right to have equalization as long as you do not affect us in British Columbia. If the railways need increased revenues let them get them from the province of Alberta. We do not care; that is what has been done all through the years." They say that despite all the handicaps and obstacles Alberta is progressing. Yes, it is; but it is not because of the co-operation of those who are opposing this measure. Certainly we recognize the difficulties confronting the railways, and we want to do our share in seeing that they are maintained in a proper condition. I was interested in the suggestion made by the hon. member for Vancouver South that the western area in British Columbia should be extended farther eastward than Mission. I do not object to that. I was glad he made that remark, but why stop at the British Columbia line? We would like to extend

[Mr. Argue.]

that area into Alberta. We would like to push it on into Saskatchewan.

Mr. Bryce: Don't forget Manitoba.

Mr. Johnston: Yes, Manitoba too. We would like it so well that we would go further and say that the one and one-third rule should not apply. It should be a parity rule. I wonder if the hon. member would agree with that. We do not want to have to pay one and one-third of the transcontinental rates. We think we should have parity. Why should the people of Alberta pay one-third more than the people of Vancouver, British Columbia? The reason is that we recognize the difficulty of the C.P.R. and the C.N.R., and we are willing to co-operate. We are willing to compromise and be soaked another one-third. The British Columbia Conservative members are not agreeable to that. They want us to take all the load. I refer to the Conservative members as a whole because I do not want to be personal about the thing and I do not intend to be, but the members of the Conservative party who were on that committee—

Mr. Ferguson: Speak for yourself. Don't try to be a mind reader.

Mr. Green: May I ask the hon. member a question? Were there any Conservative members from British Columbia on that committee other than myself?

Mr. Johnston: I do not know about other Conservative members from British Columbia, but there were other Conservative members on the committee.

Mr. Ferguson: If you could read my mind you would sit down.

Mr. Johnston: What did the hon. member say?

Mr. Ferguson: I said if you could read what is in my mind you would sit down.

Mr. Johnston: I sympathize with the hon. member for Simcoe North because he has to back up some of the remarks made by his associates before that committee. He really does have my sympathy.

Mr. Ferguson: I am against your remarks voluntarily. I do not have to be.

Mr. Johnston: As long as your remarks are all involuntary it will be all right.

Mr. Ferguson: Well, read my mind and sit down.

Mr. Johnston: I thought the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra went to some pains to point out to the house that there was no great principle involved in this bill. He said there was no great change, so why bother