

*Railway Act—Grain Rates*

representatives of the western provinces, it matters not which, telegraphed to me accepting the agreement as proposed during the interprovincial conference, but pointed out that grades No. 4 and No. 5 of wheat and some higher grades of barley should also be included in the agreement because, he said, the grades already provided for in the agreement were not sufficient to cover the grades of feed grain at the present time. I immediately took the matter up with the railway companies, and within twenty-four hours those grades were included in the agreement as proposed by a minister of one of the four western provinces. I merely mention that to show that the hon. gentleman might well have exercised patience until he knew the terms of the compromise agreement before pressing his bill to a vote in this house, because in view of the principle which his bill challenges, and in view of the further fact that he does not understand the compromise agreement, his bill could not possibly be accepted at the present time.

I might also point out to him that the arrangement which has been made is not an arrangement that forever closes the door to British Columbia or any other western province, or any of the eastern provinces for that matter. It does not preclude any of them from appealing to the Board of Railway Commissioners or to the railways for further concessions in rates. There is nothing in the agreement which will in any way prejudice the rights of British Columbia, or Manitoba, or Saskatchewan or Alberta, or any of the eastern provinces, in going before the Board of Railway Commissioners and, as a last resort, appealing from the board to the government of Canada, with representations as to any other section of the whole rate structure. So I say, without meaning any offence, that the hon. gentleman's impatience is carrying him along a little too rapidly. We have heard the expression, an old man in a hurry, but I am afraid that my hon. friend is a young man in a hurry, and he might well stall his hurry just a little until he knows what has been done by his predecessors in this house and by the government of the day.

My hon. friend has asked me a number of questions in regard to rates. I do not intend to deal with the intricacies of the rate structure at the present time. Had he let me know the questions he was going to ask I should have come prepared with answers. Some of them I shall not attempt to answer here, because I do not choose to deal with the intricate question of rates. There is one rate, however, which he quoted, which I shall mention. He gave the rates on grain from Edmonton and Calgary to the head of the lakes, as

[Mr. Manion.]

compared with the rates from Edmonton and Calgary to Vancouver. I should like to point out to him what should be recognized by all members, and from western Canada particularly, that these two rates are on two entirely different and distinct bases inasmuch as the head of the lakes is an internal port and Vancouver is an ocean port. Once grain gets to the head of the lakes it has still a thousand miles further to travel to Montreal in the summer or to the maritime ports in winter before it is on the same basis as grain arriving at the port of Vancouver. The fact that the exports of wheat from Vancouver during the last two or three years have been rapidly gaining as compared with the exports from Montreal shows that Vancouver and British Columbia are not being too badly treated, or they would not be making these immense gains, upon which I heartily congratulate them.

I do not wish to delay the house, Mr. Speaker. In view of the points I have indicated, I must say on behalf of the government that this bill cannot be accepted at this time, at any rate.

Mr. A. W. NEILL (Comox-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, it is always considered ungracious to look a gift horse in the mouth. I do not wish to be put into that position. If it was the minister who negotiated this agreement, I wish to give him full credit for what he has done. Sometimes however we must ask ourselves whether or not the gift horse is, in fact, a gift horse, or is but a very meagre measure of justice for which we have been waiting too long. If that be the case we might ask the question: Why give us half a measure of justice? Why not give it all to us? It is all very well for the minister to say that the matter can be reopened. I picture to myself any hon. member bringing up this subject next year. On such an occasion what would be the reply? We would hear the statement, "This was settled by agreement last year, and it is quite out of place to bring it up a second time."

Quite properly and accurately the minister has stated that among British Columbia members for many years this has been a subject of agitation. My own association with it goes back to 1923, and on many occasions since that time I have spoken in the house concerning it. Instead of seeking to belittle the efforts of the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Reid) by stating that the hon. member should be sitting in his seat waiting for older members to take action, I suggest that as in a political sense he is youthful, his enthusiasm and vigour are to his credit. We have rather to thank him for bringing the