

*Lake Transport Conditions*

royal commission. The commission itself will never discover that fact. It is quite impossible for members on this side of the House or for private members on that side of the House or for the public to pass any judgment upon the correctness of that act unless they have this material laid before them. I do not see that it will in any way prejudice any action the commission may take, and I would ask the Prime Minister if that report is to be a sealed book to this House and the public.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The government will be only too glad to make public Mr. Preston's report at the right time, but I think my hon. friend, if he reflects for a moment, will agree with me that while there are charges in Mr. Preston's report made against certain companies which charges the government believed were substantial enough to warrant its appointing a royal commission, it would hardly be advisable that those charges should be published broadcast before there is an opportunity for the commission itself to investigate.

Mr. ARTHURS: Why not?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Why should there be any charge levelled against any man until he had an opportunity, with such protection as is afforded him by a court of law properly constituted, to defend himself against that charge?

Mr. ARTHURS: That is not the ordinary procedure.

Mr. BAXTER: You appoint a commission and their report is acted upon without any investigating commission making a preliminary inquiry. As far as making a charge against a man is concerned, many a man has to undergo a long period of examination before he can put in a defence. Sometimes a man's character seems to be irretrievably blackened before the public by the ordinary process of our courts, though he may be declared innocent eventually. It is something we have all to stand as citizens, because you cannot have everything take place at the same moment of time. What we ask now is not the investigation of some individual. We are not asking the condemnation of any individual, but we do want to know on what information, whether it is correct or not, the government proceeded in this matter. I would think we are entitled to it. I do not wish to put it in an offensive way, and I am trying not to look at it from a partisan standpoint, but I cannot see any difference in principle between this motion and a large num-

[Mr. Baxter.]

ber of returns that have been ordered by the House.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I might say to my hon. friend, the government will be pleased to give him the report which Mr. Preston has made at the right time. He will then be in a position to judge whether the government has acted wisely or

11 p.m. not in having had a preliminary investigation made, and constituting a royal commission to investigate the matters brought to its attention.

I mentioned only one aspect in reply to my hon. friend at first. There is another aspect. From many sources an effort has been made to obtain this report from the government by some of the parties that are appearing before the commission. Now the government does not feel that the information which has been gathered, and which will be presented to the royal commission, should be given out at this particular time. The commission itself is the best judge in that regard.

Mr. STEVENS: Will this report by Mr. Preston to the government be submitted to the royal commission? If so, and presuming it refers to certain companies and individuals, will such companies and individuals have full opportunity of knowing that the commission is in possession of a report of this kind and have an opportunity to reply to it? Thirdly, I would ask, if they do not have that full opportunity, would it not tend to prejudice the commission in arriving at its conclusion to be furnished with a report making certain statements which have never been replied to by the parties affected?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I can reply to my hon. friend that I have not the slightest doubt at all that Mr. Preston's report will be submitted to the commission. Indeed, I think it already has been. I am sure that every representation which that report contains will be made public by the commission itself, and the parties affected by any of the representations will have every opportunity to make their reply and to bring out whatever evidence and make whatever statements they wish to make in regard to what is alleged in the report. But I think my hon. friend will agree that to give to the parties, in advance, information of this kind is only to enable them to take advantage of a situation which it is in the public interest they should not take advantage of.

Mr. BAXTER: Perhaps I do not understand my right hon. friend clearly. Was I correct in thinking that he said that the publication of the report now might be taken