

ary. At that time there seemed to be a possibility of some kind of a subsidized rate roll-back on the railways.

We appeared before the minister to indicate in advance, our opposition to such a measure. We felt that to oppose a rate roll-back, which would have diminished the 17 per cent rate increase, we might also have been faced with the question: it is all very well for you truckers to come along and say, let us have no subsidized rate reduction for one form of transport because this whole transportation system is competitive; but are you operating in the trucking industry with any rate set at the level of say, 30 years ago when the first trucks began to roll? Of course, our answer would have to be no, not only that, but we could not operate under those circumstances. So in our submission to the minister we took a position on the Crowsnest Pass rates, what might be called an interim position, and this was discussed by our board of directors all across Canada.

I will paraphrase what we said to the minister. I will give the essential position and leave out some of the relevant information which does not change our position.

If any action should be considered by the government in respect to the Crowsnest pass rates—either the raising of these rates by parliament, or, in lieu of this, a subsidy to the railways specifically for the grain movement—careful study must be made of the cost of handling the grain traffic and the revenue received by the railways in order to find out if the present level of grain rates is compensatory.

It may be that the grain rates are not compensatory and that the government will conclude that something should be done about it. But we submit that the matter is not one that can be decided in a day, a week, or even in a month.

Those particular words, “in a day, a week, or even in a month” were addressed to our concern at that moment that rail rate subsidization might be immediately in the offing.

The comments of Commissioner H. B. Chase—his “further observations” in the decision of the Board of Transport Commissioners awarding the railways a 17 per cent freight rate increase—support the contention that it may now be in the interests of all concerned to embark upon a study of the Crowsnest pass rates and to come to grips with this problem of the railways, if it is agreed that a problem exists.

Even if the government should finally decide that the railroads should be compensated from the treasury solely in respect to maintenance of the Crowsnest grain rates at their present level, the government would have to have before it precise and adequately determined evidence as to what this level should be. It would be unfair and discriminatory, in respect to modes of transport directly competitive with the railways in both service and rates, to undertake subsidization of the railroads beyond an amount truly compensatory in respect to the Crowsnest grain rates.

The trucking industry will, of course, have to face intensified competition from the railways if it is found that the Crowsnest Pass rates, to be maintained at their present level, should become at least a partial charge upon the public treasury. If some revenues of the railways are now tied up in support of these rates, these revenues, with the advent of a specific subsidy directed only to the Crowsnest rates, would be freed for support of general operations of the railways.

Even if the consequences should bear directly upon the fortunes of the trucking industry, we merely ask that whatever is done should be fairly and properly determined and based on facts authoritatively assembled.