

*Railway Act—Mr. Barber*

and mill feed. Again I ask the Conservative members from British Columbia to get in with us. If we keep pulling together surely we will get results some time.

Mr. H. J. BARBER (Fraser Valley): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker (Mr. Munn) has intimated that we should get behind hon. gentlemen opposite in order to obtain a reduction on the rate to British Columbia on feed grain. I might say to the hon. gentleman that long before he entered this house we were fighting for a lower rate on feed grain. We took it up in 1925, in 1926 and again in 1927. At that time the provincial authorities saw fit to step in and take the case to the railway commission, which I think was the proper tribunal. They spent some \$130,000 in employing legal men to fight this case, but the result was that we did not get a reduction. I want to make it clear to the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Reid) and the hon. member for North Vancouver that we agree with what they have said with regard to the situation in British Columbia. We realize the unfortunate position in which the poultrymen and dairy farmers find themselves and the disadvantage they are under as compared with other districts in Canada. We have been ready and we are ready to-day to do everything possible to have these rates lowered so that the poultrymen, the dairymen and the stock raisers in our province may be in a more favourable position to compete with the neighbouring provinces.

I agree with the hon. member when he says that these rates are unfair but I do not think he is adopting the proper method of remedying the condition. As he said, he introduced a bill similar to this one in 1931; he introduced another bill in 1932; he has introduced this bill and he says he is going to continue to introduce bills. I am afraid the farmers of the province will be out of business long before this type of legislation becomes law. In 1903, Sir Wilfrid Laurier realized that the question of freight rates was too complicated a matter to be considered in parliament and he appointed the board of railway commissioners which was designed to function as a court of record in the same way as the supreme and exchequer courts. It was to have complete control and authority over all questions pertaining to the operation of our railways including the charges to be made for hauling traffic. It was to function as a judicial body and was to hear all interested parties. Its decisions were to depend, first, on the evidence submitted and, second, on the proper appreciation of the evidence in

[Mr. Munn.]

relation to the relief sought. Provision was made for appeals from the decisions of this board to the privy council and I think it will be admitted that on the whole it has proved to be satisfactory. At times there have been criticisms of this board, but every section of Canada has been accorded an opportunity to appear before it. The present leader of the opposition (Mr. Mackenzie King) as well as the former Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Euler) have expressed opinions on this matter. I have referred to this before but I think it is worth while repeating. The hon. member for New Westminster has referred to a statement made by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Stevens) and I shall deal with this a little later. If hon. members will turn to page 4439 of Hansard of 1925 they will find that the then Prime Minister, the present leader of the opposition, said:

I have been looking over some of the speeches which I made in western Canada last fall, and which were quoted, in part I think, by the hon. leader of the Progressive party (Mr. Forke) in his remarks the other evening. I notice in speaking on the prairies I intimated very clearly that my view was that the railway commission was the right body to fix rates and should be given a free hand in the matter but that I felt it should expect to receive directions from the government on matters of national policy. When speaking in Vancouver and Victoria I made similar statements. . . .

That was the view of the present leader of the opposition. Let us see what was said by the hon. member for North Waterloo (Mr. Euler). At page 4420 of Hansard of the same year the hon. gentleman made the following statement:

The railway board is charged with the duty of making rates fair and equitable to all. We have set up the board to do that work. Why then not let the board perform that duty? They are infinitely better qualified to make these rates than are members of parliament. If parliament has no confidence in the railway board—and that sentiment has been expressed by some hon. members—then the remedy is not to throw the business of rate-making into this house; the remedy is so to constitute your board that you will have confidence in it.

Those are the statements, respectively, of the present leader of the opposition and the hon. member for North Waterloo.

The hon. member for New Westminster referred to a statement made by the present Minister of Trade and Commerce. I am very sorry he did not quote from the speech made a little earlier in that debate. I would refer the house to Hansard, two or three pages earlier in that debate of June 16, 1925, at page 4319, and I would ask my hon. friend to