

*Supply Bill*

Mr. KING (Kootenay): Mr. Chairman, I wish to inform the hon. member and the committee that the Minister of the Interior has been ill during the past week and is not able to attend to-day. I regret that I have not the explanation referred to by my hon. friend.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: May I say to my hon. friend that the fiscal year is not yet at an end, and some of that money may still be required between now and the end of March.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): In this case, Mr. Chairman, I should like to remind the government of the order in council which was passed, I think, on February 13 of this year, p.c. No. 225, which specifically instructed the railway board to immediately inquire and report to the government upon the question of the cost of transporting coal from both the maritimes and the west to the central provinces. Some delay ensued, a natural delay, for the preparation of counsels' briefs, but I understand that at this moment counsel on all sides are prepared to go on. The case could be disposed of for action at this session of parliament. If the Board of Railway Commissioners do not consider this matter of sufficient importance, even in view of the declaration on the part of the Privy Council of its immediate necessity, then no action can be taken until after the general rates inquiry is disposed of, which will delay any action on the transportation of coal for at least a year, thus losing two seasons' movement. I think, Mr. Chairman, it is of the utmost importance that the Prime Minister should assure the committee that he will use every effort to see that the instructions of the order in council of last year are carried out by the Board of Railway Commissioners at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Mr. Chairman, my colleague, the Minister of Railways and Canals (Mr. Dunning), may be able on behalf of the government to give an answer to my hon. friend on that point.

Mr. DUNNING: There are, Mr. Chairman, a number of rate cases now before the Board of Railway Commissioners. The one to which my hon. friend refers I believe, if I heard him correctly, has to do with coal rates.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): The order in council.

Mr. DUNNING: Exactly. My information is that at the present time the board is considering an application that that particular case be taken up forthwith. But there are [Mr. E. J. Garland.]

a number of orders in council referring various matters to the railway board, orders dated approximately the same date, and in some cases the decisions of the board with regard thereto have been appealed to the Privy Council, that is, to the government. I expect before the House meets again following the adjournment that the government will have to arrange to hear counsel representing the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia on one appeal and on another appeal the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in connection with this matter. The government is becoming a sort of court of appeal from the Board of Railway Commissioners—not a very happy position to be placed in. The briefs are very voluminous, and apparently the government must under the law constitute itself a court of appeal. I will be glad to look into the question raised by my hon. friend, but I doubt very much if the government is justified in interfering and saying to the Board of Railway Commissioners, "You shall hear this case or that case first," except on a proper appeal being taken from the decision of the board as to the date of hearing that particular case.

Mr. EDWARDS (Frontenac): Mr. Chairman, I have no desire to take up more than a few minutes of the time of the committee, for I realize the general desire to close business this afternoon; but in regard to putting through these estimates, while I appreciate the fact that since the war there have been very many calls on the national finances which have prevented the government from giving consideration to very just claims for the spending of money in various parts of the country, yet I do want to say this, that these places which should receive consideration cannot be put to one side if money is to be spent in other places where it is needed less. Twelve years ago a lot was bought in the village of Sydenham in Frontenac for a post office. Nothing has been done since. Again, I say that I do not find any fault because of that delay, having regard to all the circumstances. I wish to impress upon the government this fact, that there are many places throughout Canada where small sums of money should be spent for the proper accommodation of the public, and these conveniences cannot be indefinitely postponed. I shall register my very strong protest against, for example, any disposition to spend any sum of money, large or small, in making changes in the city of Ottawa, such as have been suggested in the way of tearing down one or two blocks and putting up new buildings. I should not feel that I was doing my duty if I allowed works of that kind to go on and money to be spent