

when she asks for just and fair treatment in freight rates such as the other provinces have received and enjoy.

In closing, let me say that if amalgamation does take place, we cannot tell what may happen as to freight rates; and so at this particular time, with farming conditions as they are, I ask the house to give its whole-hearted support to this bill on behalf of the people of British Columbia so that the people of that province may obtain just the same treatment as the other provinces have received.

Hon. R. J. MANION (Minister of Railways and Canals): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to take up much of the time of the house on this question. Unfortunately I did not know that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Reid) had any intention of moving the second reading of this bill to-day, although the motion has been on the order paper for quite a long time. The fact is, however, that I had drawn to the hon. member's attention, not once, but a number of times, that a temporary arrangement had been made at the inter-provincial conference which had been accepted as satisfactory for the time being at any rate by the four western provinces, in view of which I had hoped that the hon. gentleman would be at least patient enough to find out what the terms of that compromise agreement were before he decided to push his bill to a vote.

The hon. gentleman proposes by this bill that this House of Commons shall become a rate-making body. I submit, Mr. Speaker, that while the government is certainly not a rate-making body, the House of Commons, much more emphatically I submit, is not a rate-making body. We have had in this country for a great many years a Board of Railway Commissioners whose business it is to investigate and pass judgment on railway rates that are submitted to them in different portions of the country. That body was appointed for that very purpose, in order to take away from the government and parliament of Canada the need for going into such a technical question as rate-making, with which neither the government nor parliament is properly prepared to deal. On that ground alone I submit, without dealing with the merits of the question at all, this bill should not be accepted by the House of Commons.

The compromise agreement to which I have referred was accepted by telegram or letter to me by each of the four western provinces. When the agreement was made during the interprovincial conference there were present two representatives of each of the western

provinces, with the exception of British Columbia, which was represented by its Minister of Finance, Mr. Jones. The representatives of these four provinces expressed themselves as entirely satisfied with that compromise agreement, but its formal acceptance was postponed until the proposal should be submitted in writing to the provinces. That proposal was ultimately put in writing and submitted to the provinces, and I repeat that I have now received from each of the four western provinces their acceptance of that agreement as a satisfactory compromise at the present time. I should like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of this house, whether I am to accept the opinions of the governing body in British Columbia and in the other western provinces, or the word of my hon. friend across the way. The hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Reid) apparently has arrogated to himself the right to speak for the whole province of British Columbia. He is bringing up many very important questions and has apparently taken the position that his ipse dixit must be the last word on the subject and must be accepted by this government and by parliament and the country generally. Personally I refuse to accept it, and I do not think this house or the country is willing to accept his word as against that of the government in power in British Columbia and of the other governments of the three western provinces.

I should like also in this connection to point out to the hon. gentleman that the House of Commons has not been awaiting his arrival to see champions arise on behalf of British Columbia. I have been in this house seventeen years in the course of which at practically every session I have heard members on both sides of the house, notably my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Stevens) and other hon. gentlemen from British Columbia on this side of the house and the other, all of them outstandingly able men at least comparable with my hon. friend, and I say that without offence, men who have studied these questions for many years, champion the rights of British Columbia and frequently win recognition from this house and parliament of those rights long before the hon. gentleman ever arrived here.

The hon. gentleman from New Westminster also spoke of No. 4 and No. 5 grades of wheat. It simply illustrates the fact that he should have waited until the terms of the compromise agreement had been settled and tabled in this house before he pressed his bill, because the very grades of wheat which he complains are not in the compromise agreement happen to be in that agreement. One of the repre-