

Supply—Transport

hon. friend is perhaps a member of the committee, and he may wish to raise this question in the committee.

Mr. Isnor: I am not a member of the committee, and that is why I refer to this matter here. In the past I have placed questions indirectly before the committee without getting a satisfactory answer. I know the minister well enough to know that he would not accept an answer like that if he were making inquiry about a subject in which he was interested. I sincerely trust that he will point out to the officials of the C.N.R. what I have said today. I feel that they should be asked to give full information as to the names of the suppliers of coal, particularly those in Nova Scotia.

Mr. Hatfield: What is being done about the shortage of refrigerator cars in the maritime provinces? I understand that the railroads sent a number of these cars to British Columbia because of the cold weather, and have not received a sufficient number back to meet the needs of the maritimes for the loading of potatoes. There is a great shortage of refrigerator cars in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

Mr. Chevrier: I think perhaps we had better settle this question right away. My information is that there is not the shortage of cars to which my hon. friend refers. I stated the position in the house the other day, and I am prepared to state it again. I wish hon. members would agree on what the position is, because it is impossible to get agreement. Some say to me that the position is excellent, and then the hon. member for Queens and now my hon. friend states that it is not. I have a letter here from someone who should—

Mr. Hatfield: The minister mentioned Prince Edward Island the other day, not New Brunswick.

Mr. Chevrier: I am dealing now with Prince Edward Island, and I am also dealing—

Mr. Hatfield: I am dealing with New Brunswick.

Mr. Chevrier:—with the mainland. I have here a letter dated March 10, 1950, from the director of transportation of the Department of Industry and Natural Resources, Prince Edward Island, addressed to the deputy minister of transport. It reads:

The real facts are that during the past several months we have had the best refrigerator car situation here for some years and I, for one, have no hesitation in going on record as stating that the Canadian National Railways have done everything in their power to aid us in this refrigerator car situation. I feel very strongly that they should be given full credit for this, and to my personal knowledge the Canadian National Railways officials

at Charlottetown, at Moncton, and at Montreal, have given every attention to this matter and I feel very confident they will use all means within their power to aid our shippers in the months of March and April.

He goes on to refer to the additional service rendered by the *Abegweit*.

My hon. friend has referred to New Brunswick. The information I have from the Canadian National Railways is that there is no shortage, but in view of what my hon. friend has said, I shall make further inquiry. The director of transportation in Prince Edward Island should know what he is talking about, and from statements which I have made from time to time in the house—

Mr. McLure: To whom is that letter directed?

Mr. Chevrier: To the deputy minister of transport.

Mr. Hatfield: To my knowledge there is a great shortage in New Brunswick on the transcontinental and on the Saint John valley line. We have been trying to secure cars for weeks, and I am receiving telegrams every day.

Mr. Argue: On April 7, 1948, by order in council P.C. 1487, the board of transport commissioners was directed to conduct a general inquiry into the freight rate structure. As was recognized in that order in council, prevailing freight rates are discriminatory against certain parts of Canada; and as the minister well knows, any subsequent increase means an increase in that discrimination. My question is, how soon does the minister expect that a report will be made by the board on the general freight rate inquiry, and how much work has been done on that inquiry to date?

Mr. Chevrier: The answer to the first part of the question is, unfortunately, that it will not be very soon. Perhaps I should amplify that by saying that after the government instructed the board of transport commissioners to make an equalization of the freight rate structure in Canada, a royal commission was established to dispose of a number of matters concerning transportation. Meanwhile the board proceeded, under P.C. 1487, to ask the various provinces to make submissions, but the provinces took the position that the submissions they had to make at the time to the royal commission were of such importance that they would have to defer, for some time at least, their submissions on the general question of equalization.

In the meantime the board have not lost their time. They have instituted a waybill study. That is a study which will take some considerable time; also the recommendations