

Royal Commission on Transportation

of chairman of the commission when Hon. C. P. McTague, Q.C., had to relinquish his place on the commission because of ill health.

A statement of information and a summary of the report has been furnished to me by the secretary of the commission. I should like as well to table that summary from the secretary in both English and French.

Mr. Pearson: Is the Prime Minister going to make any statement on the report at this time?

Mr. Diefenbaker: No, Mr. Speaker, I think that any statement will be given in due course but not at this time.

Hon. Lionel Chevrier (Laurier): Perhaps the Prime Minister would allow a question or two in connection with the report which he has tabled. Does the report which he has just now tabled involve legislation?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. gentleman knows, the report is simply a compendium of the recommendations of a royal commission. After study has been given thereto, the question as to whether legislation shall be introduced will be determined and the house will be advised thereof.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask the Prime Minister another question? The Prime Minister will recall that, during the course of the debate on the resumption of work legislation, he indicated that in this interim report or first report of the commission there would be found a formula which would deal with the freight rate structure and also with the resumption of work. The Prime Minister has seen, if not the report, at least the summary handed to him by the secretary. I think the opposition should know whether that formula to which the Prime Minister made reference is to be found in the report.

Mr. Diefenbaker: As I recall it, I expressed the hope and expectation that the report would contain recommendations which would tend to alleviate or remove the detrimental effects of horizontal increases in freight rates and would suggest means whereby discrimination against various localities and regions in Canada might be removed. After the hon. gentleman has had an opportunity to read the report he will be in a position to understand the nature and degree of the recommendations that are made.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) also suggested that in it would be found a formula which would not only do away with the inequalities but would also deal with the resumption of work and, in effect, avoid the strike. The question I am putting—

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think perhaps the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) should reserve his questions until the orders of the day. What has transpired is that the house, by leave, has permitted the Prime Minister to revert to motions for the purpose of noting the filing of a report, but he has not made any statement thereon. Our practice has been not to discuss a document when tabled, which is all that has been done at this stage.

I intervened because I thought the hon. member had perhaps only a minor matter upon which to raise a question, but if there is to be any prolonged discussion of the matter or further questioning, I suggest it be done on the orders of the day or deferred until the matter can be debated.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, I am not complaining about the inference in Your Honour's statement, but Your Honour will remember that the Prime Minister asked for leave to revert to motions which, as is the custom, was granted. However, when that has been done, and particularly when it concerns a report of this importance from the royal commission on transportation, which everybody has been awaiting with interest, I think it is only fair and reasonable that the opposition should be allowed to ask one or two questions.

I had another question or two, in the light of what was tabled, and I thought perhaps the Prime Minister would not have any objection to replying to them.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, in so far as the hon. gentleman's interpretation of my remarks in the previous debate is concerned, may I say that I do not accept the interpretation of those remarks which he has just given. Therefore a debate would certainly result if any further questions were allowed at this time.

After the hon. gentleman has read the report he will be in a better position to ask questions and he will then receive answers.

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, may I ask this final question? The Prime Minister has not refused to reply to my questions. The question I was going to ask was—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has indicated that he felt, as I did, that a series of questions would lead to discussion and debate. At the most, the hon. member for Laurier would have the right to comment on the report, and I take it that he would not wish to do that without having an opportunity to read it.