

*Supply—Transport*

rightly or wrongly, that this is a responsibility of the dominion government and of this parliament, and it is in accordance with that view that in this house this morning I am expressing the opinion that it is the obligation of members of parliament and of parliament itself to say what they think about the continuance of this board on the present basis.

I do not want any word that I have said to imply criticism of provinces which have launched appeals, because I recognize that they were in a most unfavourable position in relation to the central provinces. In spite of the views I have expressed, if those provinces had not expressed the opinions that they did express, some of the inequities that have occurred would not have been remedied to the extent that they have. I hope this morning, and later today, during the discussion of this matter, that we shall see evidence in this house that the provinces are effectively represented in federal matters by their representatives; that we shall hear members from every party express their opinions as to the conduct of the board and as to the present inequity of the freight rate structure of Canada and the necessity to end the discrimination which is so unfair to the maritime and western provinces. Unless we hear Liberal members, as well as other members from the maritimes and western Canada, express their opinions, the contention of the dominion government that every province is fully represented by its membership here stands on very uncertain ground. I hope, if for no other reason than that, Liberal members will prove here in the house and to the people of Canada at large that every province is represented and that the views of those provinces are represented, that by their vote—and I am going to offer the opportunity to vote—they will indicate they believe the time has come for drastic action in this matter.

It is not now possible to move an amendment which calls for a reconstitution of the board, but on the present basis the board could be wound up and the government could carry on its activities with whatever staff is maintained, because they are assuming the ultimate obligation anyway to decide what is to be done.

There must be a board of some kind; there must be an independent body, and a very much more independent body than we have had, charged with the responsibility of carrying forward into our transportation problems those fundamental principles which guided the construction of our roads and the development of this country in the first place. Therefore I feel that the house will support the government in the setting up of any newly constituted body, and will pass whatever supplementary estimates are necessary to meet that

purpose. It is my view, however, that the board as now constituted, in view of its own decision that it cannot work out the details from its own records, is not competent to proceed to deal with these tasks, and that the government now must assume direct responsibility for this situation. If the government deals with this matter, and if the government does grasp the nettle and really deal with the problem, I hope it will give to the board, however constituted and with whatever authority it is granted, technical and expert advice at the very highest level which day by day will have available the changing statistics and changing considerations, thus making it possible for the board to act promptly in dealing with these matters—promptly not only in fairness to the people of Canada and to every part of Canada, but in fairness to the railways as well. They simply cannot operate except on a basis of sound economy. On a broad and balanced basis let the board make its award in such a way that the railways may operate soundly and effectively, and also that they may perform their services with full recognition of the right of every Canadian in every part of Canada jointly to receive benefit from the railways that this country supports—and it supports the private as well as the public railways—and so that there also will be available to them the very highest level of transportation in those areas which vision and good judgment tell us will open up rapidly in the years ahead.

For that reason, Mr. Chairman, and to give an opportunity to indicate to the government that the time has come for real and drastic action, I move:

That item No. 524 be reduced to the figure of one dollar.

**Mr. Coldwell:** Mr. Chairman, with very much of what the leader of the opposition (Mr. Drew) has said I find myself in agreement this morning. Frequently there is disagreement between us, but he has expressed a point of view in regard to the board of transport commissioners that most of us in the House of Commons should hold, after reviewing the judgments and the history of this board for the last few years.

He has made a direct attack upon the competence of the board, using the term "competence" in its dictionary meaning; and I believe that attack was thoroughly justified. One has only to look at the judgment of the board itself in the most recent application of the railways to realize how incompetent the board is.

The chief commissioner, the chairman of the board, Mr. Justice Archibald, has been gravely ill, and his health is impaired. He did have, in larger measure perhaps than