

*Railway Act*

which both railways operate. I do not think there is any direct relationship between what you pay a man in a particular category and what you get out of him in service. If there were a direct relationship, then I know many public servants of this government, men of outstanding merit, whom we would not have retained as long as we have.

At the same time there is some relationship and certainly there is some connection between the salaries we pay and the services we should expect to obtain from the men we hire. The salaries which will be adopted in this bill are remarkably low when we consider what we should expect from the men who are going to form the board of transport commissioners for Canada. The hon. member for Cape Breton South said this afternoon that they have an important task. I do not think there is a more important commission in Canada because, as he said—and said very well—not only are they administering the conditions under which the roads operate, but they have much to do with determining the economic growth and development of the country. We are going to have to depend more and more upon that commission. I would suggest to the minister that as we go along in developing this policy, he also always bear in mind that we want the strongest and best commission we can possibly have, at all times. We want the most energetic and the best informed. And—and this may be more important than even the commissioners themselves—they should have assistants in the engineering branch, and in the branch of accountancy, equal in all respects to those of the railways. We should be prepared to employ these men, and to pay whatever salaries are necessary to get men as competent as those of the public utilities appearing before them.

**Mr. Argue:** Mr. Chairman, I have only a few remarks I should like to make at this point. I have listened with a great deal of interest to hon. members preceding me. I listened to the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra. His interpretation of the value of this bill is not the same as mine. If I remember correctly he said that in this bill there is no broad, new, general freight rates policy for Canada. I believe there is a new freight rates policy for Canada spelled out in this bill, in section 332A. That feature of the bill is something for which the people of western Canada have been battling for many years. It is perfectly true that this bill does not provide for the equalization of freight rates by legislation, but it does make the equalization of freight rates, with certain exceptions, the declared national freight rates policy. I

[Mr. Laing.]

believe that declared national freight rates policy will strengthen the stand of the provinces when they appear before the board of transport commissioners from time to time in an effort to obtain a fairer freight rates structure.

The work of obtaining a better freight rates policy will begin with the passage of this bill. This measure does not in itself guarantee in any way the equalization of freight rates; it does not guarantee a better deal for western Canada, but it has in it all the possibilities of a better deal. It will now be up to the board of transport commissioners to see that the terms of this bill are put into effect and that the people in the various provinces get the new freight rates deal for which they have hoped.

When the matter of an increase in the salaries of the transport commissioners was brought up in committee I stated, on the basis of an answer which I had received from the minister that the total of the increases would amount to only \$9,000, that I did not feel I could oppose such an increase if it would be effective in strengthening the board of transport commissioners. If there is one thing the report of the royal commission emphasizes repeatedly it is the many ways the present board of transport commissioners has fallen down in dealing with the freight rates question. If a total increase of \$9,000 divided among the members of the board of transport commissioners will be successful in bringing about a fairer freight rates structure resulting in large savings to the people of western Canada, perhaps amounting to millions of dollars, I cannot but support those increases.

I hope the minister will obtain the best possible men as commissioners. I have discussed the personnel of the present board with some people who I believe have some idea of its competence, and was informed that one member of the board was in the habit of going to sleep through much of the freight rates hearings. I suppose if a member of parliament goes to sleep too often in the House of Commons his constituents will take care of him at a general election, but I do not think there is room for a member of the board of transport commissioners who goes to sleep. It is time the government obtained the best possible personnel.

We have agreed to the minister's request that increases in salaries be granted, but I tell the minister that as far as I am concerned I will object to those increases if the board does not come through with the goods in a short time. We want equalization of freight rates; we want fairer freight rates, and we are willing to pay good salaries to