

IMPROVEMENT OF HIGHWAYS.

On motion of Hon. Frank Cochrane (Minister of Railways and Canals), House went into Committee on Bill No. 32, to encourage and assist the Improvement of Highways.

On section 3—grant of annual subsidy for highways and bridges:

Mr. COCHRANE: Last year the Senate made seven amendments to the Bill, and the House agreed to five of them. In clause 3 the first amendment is the substitution of the words 'the several provinces of the Dominion,' in the seventeenth line, for the words 'any province;' the striking out of the words 'in such province' in line nineteen; the substitution of the word 'subsidies' for 'subsidy' in line twenty, and the insertion after the word 'exceeding' of the words 'in the whole' in the same line.

Section agreed to.

On section 4—specifications for improvement and construction to be approved:

Mr. COCHRANE: In sections 4 and 5 the words 'or bridge' are inserted after the word 'highway.'

Section agreed to.

On section 5—agreement with province:

Mr. MACLEAN (Halifax): In this clause it is stated that provision may be made for the future maintenance of such highway bridges. What has the minister in mind—an agreement with the provinces as to future maintenance, or a joint agreement?

Mr. COCHRANE: My own idea is that it would be well to build bridges first, but later on, when we get more roads built, we might consider the advisability of helping to maintain them if they become a burden to the different provinces.

Mr. MACLEAN (Halifax): Did the minister negotiate during the recess with any of the provincial governments on this matter, and, if not, why not?

Mr. COCHRANE: I had no authority to do anything of the kind.

Mr. MACLEAN: You had a lot of money voted.

Mr. COCHRANE: But it was under this Act.

Mr. MACLEAN: Supposing that money was voted under this Act, why should you not have negotiated?

Mr. COCHRANE: We would not have had a right to expend it.

Mr. MACLEAN: Why would not the minister negotiate during the recess with the

several provinces and have some scheme or policy to present to the House?

Mr. COCHRANE: I must make the statement clearly and fully that I do not think there will be any trouble in making an agreement with any of the provinces, satisfactory to it. I feel that and I feel that most of the criticism that has been made from outside sources has been political rather than on the merits of the Bill. There is a difference of opinion as to how this should be worded but I am not at all afraid that there will be any trouble in doing business with the governments of the provinces, irrespective of party.

Mr. MACLEAN: I do not share the minister's confidence that he will not meet with difficulties in making agreements with the several provinces for the expenditure of public money. Of course he will not have the slightest trouble, the provincial governments doubtless will be glad to enter into an arrangement for such a purpose. But we as members of the Canadian Parliament and representatives of our several constituencies should see that the public moneys are not wasted and the minister knows as well as I do that there is hardly a public service, federal or local, wherein such little results are to be observed as from moneys expended on public highways. If members could be satisfied that the provinces would obtain any beneficial results from the expenditure of this money there would be no opposition to the Bill and I dissent to the proposition of the minister that it necessarily follows that any benefit will accrue to the provinces. I say that the whole policy and principle contained in the Bill is bad, principally because the minister and the Government have so far outlined no policy, there is nothing to make it appear that they have ever in council given a moment's consideration to the Bill or any part of it and I say it is the bounden duty of every member of Parliament to look at this Bill very carefully, and censoriously indeed, before it comes into operation.

Mr. COCHRANE: How would you lay down any policy in reference to it? We have first to consult the provinces in reference to it, to make an agreement with them. That is our first duty, to agree on a specification.

At six o'clock, House resumed, and then took recess.

After Recess.

House resumed at eight o'clock.

PRIVATE BILLS.

PACIFIC AND PEACE RIVER RAILWAY COMPANY.

House in Committee on Bill No. 151, respecting the Pacific and Peace River Railway Company.—Mr. Douglas.