

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

its being practical, or something that can be undertaken in a short time, that is quite a different proposition. It would represent a considerable undertaking. That is all I have to say on the questions raised.

Mr. Herridge: I want to thank the minister for the information. I am glad to know that a catalogue is being undertaken of known reserves. I am a very practical person, sir. I realize the difference between counting trees and assessing reserves under the ground, but I should be very glad to get a copy of that catalogue of known mineral reserves in Canada.

Mr. Comtois: May I remind the hon. member that this cataloguing of our mineral reserves was started in 1917 under a Tory government.

Item agreed to.

204. Explosives Act administration, \$111,648.

Mr. Dumas: Mr. Chairman, on item 204—

(Translation):

—could the minister tell the committee whether individuals or companies have asked his department to increase the load of explosives that trucks are allowed to carry under the Explosives Act?

Mr. Comtois: Could the hon. member repeat his question as I was disturbed by the messenger?

Mr. Dumas: Could the minister tell the committee whether individuals or companies have made representations to him or to his department in order to get an increase in the permissible load for trucks with a special permit to carry explosives?

Mr. Comtois: Mr. Chairman, I looked into that question, some time ago. During the year representations have come from various regions of the country but particularly from regions where explosives are hauled long distances.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the present load limit is ten thousand pounds, that is five tons, and we were asked to raise it. We received all kinds of representations on that matter. No need to say that those representations came from transport companies and not from companies which buy the explosives. Of course, the transport companies would like to save time and money, by increasing their truck loads of dynamite or explosives. We know that our present roads

[Mr. Comtois.]

can carry very heavy loads and that there is no limit to the ambitions of some owners of those huge vans that can haul about the same load as a freight car. Unfortunately, we have to resist such requests because, everything being considered, it would be extremely dangerous to allow an increase, since it cannot be known exactly where the trucks will pass. As a matter of fact, a reckless driver might go through a village and an explosion might happen. It is easy to imagine the damage that could follow and how we would be blamed for having allowed a truck to be overloaded. For example last year—I think it was on highway No. 8—a Montreal truck driver was carrying explosives and, doing so, was violating the regulations since his vehicle was not a suitable one for such a load. While on the road, the truck caught fire. Fortunately the driver was warned in time. He jumped off his truck, and immediately the explosion occurred, but without killing anyone. However, the nearest house, two acres away, and the farmer's barn were moved about two feet by the blast. One can therefore imagine what would happen should such an explosion occur in a village.

However, we realize that in some circumstances—in western Canada, for example, in the area of the hon. member for Villeneuve, in the Abitibi area—there might be some special cases which could be considered where an increase could eventually be permitted.

However, this is a matter which comes more properly under provincial jurisdiction.

I understand that a statute was adopted many years ago by the federal government and was never questioned.

I do not know whether the provinces are reluctant to take up such an explosive subject, but in any case the statute has remained unchanged. Therefore, if it involves legislation which normally comes under the provinces, it could not be amended without an agreement with the provinces, which is quite a complicated process, particularly if the provinces, while letting the legislation operate as it does, are prepared to recommend the increase of the permissible load. But I feel the matter could be settled to the satisfaction of those who are asking for changes in the legislation.

Does that answer the hon. member's question?

Mr. Dumas: Yes, Mr. Chairman.