

*Unemployment Relief*

Mr. BENNETT: Depending upon circumstances whether any other methods were more beneficial.

Mr. RALSTON: May I take it that a decision has not yet been arrived at by the government as to the methods to assist the coal mining situation?

Mr. BENNETT: That is perfectly clear.

Mr. RALSTON: I want to call my hon. friend's attention to another situation. He referred this afternoon to the precedent which, he contended, had been established in the voting by this parliament of moneys for the purposes of the Canadian National Railways. I think my hon. friend forgets that we are dealing with two situations: one a situation in which this government will directly spend and have supervision over the spending of the money; and the other, a situation in which this government will vote money to be used by the provinces in connection with works which they are carrying on. In the one case there is supervision because this house might ask the government to bring down contracts and papers with regard to the particular project which is being carried on; in the other case, so far as the committee has heard, there is no supervision, the government shedding its responsibilities the moment it makes the grant to the province. In that connection, I submit to my hon. friend that the analogy of the Canadian National Railways is not quite valid. Perhaps on reflection my hon. friend will remember that the Canadian National Railways president and directors submit to a special committee of this house a detailed list of the estimates and of the items to be contained in those estimates. Perhaps he will remember two or three years ago a rather spirited and long drawn out debate in which both he and I participated with regard to one particular item in those estimates?

Mr. BENNETT: I have the estimates beside me.

Mr. RALSTON: I am talking about the estimates which are submitted to the special committee.

Mr. BENNETT: I have also looked at the report of the special committee.

Mr. RALSTON: I am saying that there is submitted to the special committee for its perusal a list of the expenditures which it is proposed to make, and the committee has an opportunity to peruse that list and pass on it. That is not so, as I understand, in regard to the legislation now before us. That special

[Mr. Ralston.]

committee also has an opportunity of examining the officials of the railway and going fully into all matters which have to do with the proposed expenditure, and it is composed of members from both sides of the house, who in the last two or three years have made unanimous reports.

Mr. STEVENS: Those details are not submitted to the committee.

Mr. RALSTON: I understand they are.

Mr. STEVENS: They are not.

Mr. GEARY: They could not be.

Mr. STEVENS: The report of all their expenditures and appropriations is discussed, no doubt, but the details of the proposed expenditures are not.

Mr. RALSTON: I am quite certain, my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce to the contrary notwithstanding. I know he has attended that special committee, but I feel satisfied that the president of the Canadian National Railways attends with his detailed estimates, prepared to give any information which the committee desires in that respect. That is very different from the situation which is presented here, when we are asked to vote a blanket sum of \$20,000,000, and when it is suggested that we should leave it absolutely in the hands of my hon. friends opposite to make grants as they see fit to provincial governments over the expenditure of which we have no supervision. As intimated by my friend the ex-Postmaster General (Mr. Veniot), that possibly may be allowed in connection with expenditures to be made by this government direct, because of the fact that we can ask them for returns with regard to contracts and the expenditures which have been made. But I do submit that something further is needed in connection with provincial expenditures to be made under this legislation. We are simply voting money to the provincial authorities, and I want to submit one or two matters of principle which might well be considered in relation to the bill.

The first is this. With regard to the projects which are proposed to be gone on with, as I understand it the province may make application for assistance in connection with a highway, a railway or any other description of public work, any project whatever, probably provincial buildings, if that were thought desirable. I suggest, therefore, to my hon. friend that the details of any such project should be submitted, and that no blanket amount should be granted to any provincial government or any other authority without the submission of such details. And those