

Supply—Transport

be a matter of government policy. In all fairness to the house I think I should tell the hon. member for Halifax, and the other two hon. members who raised the question on Friday evening, that I shall be glad to bring their representations to the attention of my colleague. I do not know what should be done. At the time that it was approved by the veterans affairs committee it was felt that the age of thirty was a fair one. Now there seems to be some injustice.

Mr. Isnor: Would the minister be good enough to have his officials consult with the Department of Veterans Affairs?

Mr. Chevrier: Yes. I should have included that in my undertaking because it was my intention that that should be done.

Mr. Isnor: Thank you.

Mr. Chevrier: The hon. member for Vancouver East raised a question about one individual who had been prejudiced by the fact that he could not apply within the six months' period. He referred to a letter which I had written. I presume again I was bound by the terms of the order in council; but, as I have stated I shall be glad, in conjunction with my colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, to look into the terms of the order in council.

I should like to deal quickly, but without disrespect when I say "quickly", with the representations made by the hon. member for Northumberland. He presented the case very fairly as to the operations of the car ferry between Cobourg in his constituency, and Rochester, New York. The difficulty with that service, as well as with some other services operated by the Canadian National Railways, is that it is not a paying proposition. Unfortunately there is more than one service of that kind, and more than one which will have to be regarded from the standpoint of the profit of the enterprise.

In this particular case it is a joint enterprise operated by the C.N.R. and the Baltimore and Ohio Railway, and in 1948 the operating results were such that the Canadian National Railways had to sell a substantial amount of its Canadian government bonds—I believe \$80,000 worth—in order to pay the deficit. I realize that services of this character are of extreme importance to a community. The community has grown to rely upon them. Tourist traffic uses them, and it is a great pity that they should be cut off overnight, as it were, but I am afraid that I must put before the hon. member the position of the Canadian National Railways when it is face to face with keen highway competition.

[Mr. Chevrier.]

The hon. member spoke about the terrible service on the other side and the hundred stairs he had to climb. Of course that is so, and I am glad he brought it up because the service is bad not only there but elsewhere, particularly in connection with the operation of ships. People do not travel by ship today as they did in days gone by; they travel by highway. They want to move quickly, and that is why the position is such as he pointed out. That is why it is difficult to operate at a profit. When operations have shown a loss over a period of years, surely the railway must give consideration to alternatives, and when the operation is a joint one then I suppose it must consult the other joint owner, which in this case is a United States corporation.

The hon. member made some most thoughtful and helpful suggestions. I thank him for having brought them to my attention and to the attention of the house. I can assure him that I will bring them to the attention of the officers of the Canadian National Railways. He has suggested that the whole matter be referred to the Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada. I am unable to tell him at this time whether or not I would be prepared to do that. First of all I would have to be convinced that the board has jurisdiction in a matter of this kind. I am not so sure that it has, but if he will allow me to give it consideration in that respect perhaps I can tell him at a later date whether or not that is possible. I am sure he will understand it is impossible for me to do so at this juncture.

Mr. Robertson: I should like to point out one matter. The minister spoke about the sale of bonds. I believe those bonds were acquired out of operational profits of the Ontario car ferry in past years. Therefore I do not think it is too serious if they had to sell them.

Mr. Higgins: Mr. Chairman, I must say that I listened with a great deal of interest tonight to the hon. member for Halifax discussing the subject of merchant shipping. I was pleased to learn from the minister that the matter has been under active consideration by the government. I think it would be a great pity if any of our ships were allowed to lie up in mothballs as they have been recently in Halifax and in other seaports of the country.

I want to direct the attention of the committee to another matter this evening, the growing necessity for the establishment in Canada of a Canadian coastguard. It appears to me as a new member that this is a matter which has been given little, if any, consideration by the government. From the information I have obtained since I entered the