

Supply—Transport

a country with the dynamic and rapidly moving economy we have in Canada. We must have a board competent to deal week by week and month by month with the events in a country that, given the vigour and the vision that it should have, will grow faster in the years ahead than it has at any time since we became a nation.

We have no other way of stating during the present session our view that the need for action by the government is urgent, and that it must be action of the most decisive and sweeping character. After all, under the procedure as it now stands, the government must make the ultimate decision, subject of course to appeals to the Supreme Court of Canada on points of procedure, subject to the termination of an appeal now before the privy council, subject to other appeals that may occur; and I hope I am not being unfair when I say subject also to possible future miscalculations of the nature of the recent miscalculation which has just been corrected.

Mr. Low: Better get them an adding machine.

Mr. Drew: It would take a big adding machine to correct errors of that kind and on that scale. No; without any reflection on any individual member of the board, we have before us the most colossal blunder in simple arithmetic that this country has ever seen. Here at a time when children all over the country are being asked to pass examinations in ordinary arithmetic, we have the direct declaration by one of the most important agencies or boards set up by the government that it was not able to add its own figures to the tune of some \$13 million.

I am not saying that in any sense of reflection upon individuals, but I would remind the government and the members of the house that this is something for which every hon. member must assume responsibility. This board was reorganized in a very limited way some two or more years ago. At the time that was done the then prime minister emphasized the fact that there must be changes in the board and in its functions if it was to be able to do its work. There has been no substantial change. All that has happened is that there have been minor changes in personnel. It may well be that the board is carrying on under an impossible set-up, and that to a considerable extent its members may individually be placed in an unfair position. But that is something that the government must determine. That is something that the government must examine. After all, the government will very jealously guard its right to appoint the members of that board, no matter how it is constituted.

[Mr. Drew.]

Therefore we can only examine the net results; we can only accept their own decision that they were not able to carry out their task; we can only see the confusion that is caused by this series of decisions, with their variations for one reason or another; and we can only see that in over two years this board has not been able to deal with the fundamental inequity of the freight rate structure across Canada.

I have no desire to discuss any matter outside the ambit of the immediate subject that is before us. But in view of the fact that I am presenting these arguments, and in view of the fact that I would not wish any of them to be examined upon a false premise, I do want to anticipate any suggestion that while I was in a position of responsibility, other than that which I now hold, I had an opinion different from that which I am expressing here this morning.

It has been suggested from time to time that the fact that the government of Ontario when I was its head did not participate in the appeals which were before the board indicated a lack of interest in the subject.

Mr. Mutch: It surely did.

Mr. Drew: That was not so. I could not help hearing from across the way, "it surely did". That merely indicates why it is important that I attempt, if it is humanly possible, to keep this discussion on the right track.

Whether rightly or wrongly, the government with which I was associated at that time did hold the view that the British North America Act, on the one hand, placed certain responsibilities in the hands of the provinces; and we insisted that those responsibilities be recognized. We took the view that, on the other hand, the British North America Act did impose certain responsibilities on the dominion government, and we thought that the control of railways was one of the subjects which had been most exclusively placed under the jurisdiction of the dominion government by the British North America Act. We in fact held the view, which has been frequently expressed on other occasions by this government, that in relation to dominion affairs every part of Canada is represented in this house by the members sent here from the different constituencies. Whether rightly or wrongly, but strangely enough in this case holding the same view that has been expressed on other occasions by the dominion government, we thought that Ontario, in relation to dominion matters, is fully represented in this house by members of the different parties who have been elected to represent the constituencies of Ontario. We therefore took the position,