

*The Address—Mr. Baxter*

Denied that recourse, the New Brunswick potato growers put their case before the parliamentary committee. I do not say that that committee was unsympathetic, for even in its first report—the report that was suppressed—a chance was afforded for equal justice. But the action of the government deprived us of that chance. The rates on potatoes from June 7th, 1917, to December 1st, 1921, were laid before that committee, and I have no doubt it will astonish some hon. members to hear how these rates were increased in that period. These rates which I am about to quote are in cents per hundred pounds of potatoes, and are calculated on the same basis as grain rates. In 1917 the rate from the potato shipping points in New Brunswick of Debec, Hartland, Andover and Florenceville to Montreal was 19 cents; in 1921, 34½ cents. In other words, it had been increased 81 per cent.

Mr. SHAW: Can my hon. friend give the House any idea of the distance involved?

Mr. BAXTER: It does not matter as to the distances. I am sorry I cannot give my hon. friend the exact figures, but I could make a rough calculation.

Mr. SHAW: I should like to have it just roughly for comparative purposes.

Mr. BAXTER: I think from those points generally to Montreal the routing followed would give about 500 or 600 miles. To Brockville it was 21 cents in the earlier period, 37½ cents later—an increase of 78 per cent; to Ottawa, 21 cents as against 37½ cents—78 per cent increase again; to Kingston, 22 cents as against 40 cents—an increase of 81 per cent; to Peterborough, 24 cents as against 43 cents—an increase of 79 per cent; to Toronto, 25 cents as against 45½ cents—an increase of 82 per cent; to North Bay, 27 cents as against 49 cents—an increase of 81 per cent; to Hamilton, 26 cents as against 47 cents—an increase of 80 per cent; to London, 29 cents as against 52½ cents—an increase of 81 per cent; to Goderich, 30 cents as against 54 cents—an increase of 80 per cent; to Windsor, 31 cents as against 55½ cents—an increase of 79 per cent. Now, the 19 cent potato rate from the New Brunswick points mentioned to Montreal may be compared with the 18 cent rate on grain from Weyburn to Montreal. The Montreal rate, at the time parliament considered the question, had gone up to 34½ cents; the Weyburn rate had gone up to 29 cents. In other words, the Montreal rate was increased by 15½ cents, while the Weyburn

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rate was increased 11 cents. Now, parliament by that action took off 9 cents from the 11 cent increase of the Weyburn rate. That left the Weyburn rate only 2 cents higher than the lowest rates they had ever enjoyed from that place on grain; but the Montreal rate on potatoes, which I say is fairly comparable, was left increased by 81 per cent. The Board of Railway Commissioners, tied as their hands were, did the best they could. They made a reduction of from two to three cents per one hundred pounds in the potato rates; that was all they could do. I will ask hon. members, when the rate on grain is cut so low as to be almost restoring it to the very minimum rate, while the rate on potatoes is cut by such an almost infinitesimal amount, does it strike them by and large, without regard to personal considerations, without regard to local considerations, as having even the semblance of being quite fair treatment towards the potato growers in an important potato section of the province from which I come? I do not think they will feel that it is.

Well, what did my friends the potato growers in New Brunswick get? Oh, they got the sop thrown to them of a few thousand dollars which was expended in connection with their potato warehouse in St. John. Not a bad thing; it is all right to help them export potatoes, but it was to send potatoes out of the country. They were not helped to send potatoes within the country; and yet we want our railways to get a sustaining trade between one part of the Dominion and the other. We want the people of all parts of this Dominion to trade reciprocally. We have nine provinces, between which there is interposed no customs barrier, nine provinces populated by a people who, after all, approximate being one in thought and action upon the ordinary concerns of life. We want to trade together. It is vital to our interests that we should. Why then merely help us—I am not going to reprobate it, for it is not in itself a bad thing—why merely help us build up an external trade, why make a fuss about a few thousand dollars to help external trade when you have left on an embargo and a penalty on the internal trade within the bounds of this Dominion? I wonder if my friends to my left or my friends in front of me, because I am really addressing the whole House on this subject, appreciate the fact that to-day in those very counties I mention, the splendid counties of Victoria and Carleton, there has been a practical failure of the potato crop, so far as prices are concerned. They grow no better potatoes in the world