

Railway Act

totally false impression that the Conservative party is opposed to equalization and has been opposed to Alberta getting a better deal in regard to these transcontinental rates and the additional amount which can be charged to Alberta. To illustrate that this impression sought to be conveyed is absolutely wrong all we need do is go back to the debate on the motion for second reading. I think I was the only one at that time who spent the entire time he spoke in connection with this matter of the transcontinental rate and the proposal in this bill to allow only one-third more than that as the rate to intermediate points. I would say further that during the last seven years the former member for Calgary West, Mr. A. L. Smith, and I spoke more frequently in this house in connection with doing away with the discrimination as far as Alberta is concerned in connection with freight rates than any other hon. member.

When the hon. member for Bow River was speaking on second reading did he put on the great blast that he has tonight in connection with this matter of equalization? No; practically his entire speech was given over to truck competition and matters of that kind. He barely mentioned this matter. He has suddenly come out as a great champion of it and, as I say, in doing so is attempting to convey the impression that members of the Conservative party are against this; whereas the actual truth, as I have indicated, is that we have more consistently spoken in favour of doing away with this inequity as far as Alberta is concerned than anybody else.

In order to demonstrate just the situation as far as second reading was concerned I will read what I said at that time in connection with this very matter. My remarks are found at page 513 of *Hansard*. I will not read all my speech, but just one section.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harkness: I thought that hon. gentlemen to my right would be very much reassured if I made that statement first.

Mr. Stick: Hear, hear.

Mr. Harkness: This is what I said:

We in Alberta, as I think everyone knows, are at the very apex of the freight rate structure. We pay more than anybody else in Canada. We have agitated for many years for the application in Canada of the decision in what is known in the United States as the Spokane freight rates case, namely, that a higher rate cannot be charged for a haul to an intermediate point than the rate charged for the whole distance. In Calgary, for example, we have to pay up to twice as much to bring a carload of goods from Toronto as it costs to carry the same carload of goods from Toronto to Vancouver. The commission recognized the injustice of this to a certain extent and recommended that the rate to an intermediate point should not be more than one-third greater than the through rate. The bill of

[Mr. Harkness.]

course will bring this recommendation into effect through section 7. This is an improvement which I think everyone will recognize, but it still does not remove the basic inequity and the disabilities under which the economy of Alberta has had to operate in the past and under which it will have to operate in the future. I believe we should go the whole way in this matter and apply the so-called Spokane formula in Canada, particularly as far as the Canadian west is concerned.

That was my statement on the matter away back on October 30, and it was just a repetition of statements of the same sort which I have been making here for the past seven years. Any effort at the present time on the part of the hon. member for Bow River to try to convey the impression to this house and throughout the country that the Conservative party has been opposed to a fair deal in freight rates for Alberta is completely false and completely wrong.

Some hon. Members: He knows that.

Mr. Harkness: Why the hon. member should attempt to convey that impression I do not know. It was suggested by the hon. member for Royal that the by-election now pending in Calgary West may have something to do with it. That may be so, but personally I do not think the place to fight by-elections is in the House of Commons. I am sorry the hon. member has made the statements he has and has taken the line of argument he has because what I have said demonstrates quite well that there is no foundation for a contention of that kind.

Mr. Johnston: As I indicated in the committee a moment ago when I was speaking, I do not take this question lightly. It is a question that is of great importance to Alberta. I am going to suggest to the hon. member for Calgary East that if he is so concerned—and I am not saying that he is not—his proper place was on that committee. If you look up the records you will find that there were some Conservative members on that committee whose attendance was not very regular. There is no more important place for a member who is vitally interested in this question than on the committee that is dealing with it; because there are occasions when a section such as 332B could be wiped out in a vote and never come to this house at all. The committee is the place where the work is done, not speaking here a month ago, six weeks ago or two weeks ago, so that he goes on the record and out in the press as one who is a great supporter of a certain section which will help Alberta.

Mr. Ferguson: To hear you talk you would think it is all done there. If all the work is done in the committee why didn't you stay there?