

Supply—Transport

has been any undue delay, or that there have been any obstacles placed in the way of the implementation of the report of the board of engineers.

Some months ago a board of engineers, established by the government and by the province of Nova Scotia, reported upon the question of transportation across the strait of Canso. After having considered four methods, namely, improved water transportation facilities, a tunnel, a causeway and a bridge, they favoured the construction of a low-level bridge. They recommended in favour of the construction of a low-level bridge at a cost of \$13,500,000, and they recommended that after careful consideration. But they also suggested to the government that a contract be made immediately for the purpose of taking borings to ascertain whether there was any overburden. After the contract was given it was discovered that there was a substantial amount of overburden in the strait which I think had some effect upon the problem as a whole.

I am not an engineer, and of course cannot approach this from an engineering standpoint, but I should like to draw to the attention of the committee the fact that this is a difficult engineering problem because you have a very deep strait, in some places nearly 200 feet. You have currents and tides, and you have ice, all of which added together pose a difficult engineering problem, I am informed. In any event, the board of engineers recommended in favour of the low-level bridge, and we engaged a competent engineer, namely, Dr. Pratley, whose reputation is among the highest in his profession. Dr. Pratley prepared plans and specifications for the construction of a low-level bridge. Objection was taken to these plans and specifications by engineers of both the province of Nova Scotia and the Canadian National Railways. On the day the house adjourned in September of last year I had the advantage of listening in my office to the discussion that went on among all of these groups over these plans and specifications. After hearing the discussion I could come to no other conclusion than that the proper thing to do was to reconvene the board of engineers, the members of which were present, by the way, at this discussion and, in the light of those discussions, ask the board, "Have you anything further to recommend, in view of what you have already recommended? Have you anything further to tell the government, in view of the overburden that has been found there and in the light of the discussions that took place between these three various groups of

[Mr. Chevrier.]

engineers today?" The board has been reconvened. They have not yet handed down their report. When they will do so, I am not able to say definitely, but I trust it will be before the end of the session.

So that I can assure my hon. friend from Cape Breton South that there has been no undue delay, and there has been no obstacle placed in the way. I do hope that the reconvened board will report soon. What they will report I do not know. If I were an engineer I could deal more specifically with the points involved; but I hesitate to do so because I think I might be treading on rather dangerous ground.

I think I have dealt as fully as I can with the complaints of the hon. member for Cape Breton South, and I believe as completely as I can at this time with the suggestion and questions of the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra.

Mr. Green: There was one further question, and that was as to the progress made in the general rate investigation by the board of transport commissioners.

Mr. Chevrier: I am sorry to report that there has been little progress made. The reason for that is that when the board reconvened its sittings to deal with the general freight rates investigation early this year the provinces moved immediately for a stay of proceedings and a stay of the hearing until such time as the royal commission had handed down its report. The board agreed to that motion made by counsel for the provinces, and fixed a further date. When that date had been reached the report had not yet been tabled, and a further adjournment was granted.

In view of the recommendations of the commission now I think it would be in the interests of the country for the board of transport commissioners to get along with this investigation as quickly as possible. I can see no objection to the board's proceeding now with the investigation while we deal with the amendments that might be necessary in connection with the Railway Act. When its report is ready it may very well be that if we are ready with our amendments to the Railway Act they will be of some assistance to the board of transport commissioners. But in fairness to the board I must say that they cannot proceed with the investigation until such time as the provinces and railways are ready and willing to proceed.

Mr. Black (Cumberland): Mr. Chairman, this is a very important discussion. We are under obligation to the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra for his summary with