

The Address—Mr. McWilliam

through national, international, provincial and local levels. The leaders of all parties and their frontbench colleagues advance their parties' views on the issues of the day, which in a general way sets the patterns of the different debates that follow throughout the session.

Many members use the time allotted to them in the debate on the speech from the throne to discuss constituency matters. I am going to confine the remainder of my remarks to a situation that arose in the constituency of Northumberland-Miramichi, a situation that aroused the interest of the people of that area more than any other in a long time. Today, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a suggestion that I feel is in the public interest. While the situation that developed which prompts me to make the suggestion occurred in the constituency of Northumberland-Miramichi, it is one that could develop in any of the other 262 constituencies in Canada.

As hon. members are aware, minimum wage scales for workers are provided for in federal government contracts. However, there are no rates set in federal government contracts for the supplying of material or the hire of equipment. The difficulties in setting up rates for the hire of equipment or the supplying of materials with respect to federal government projects awarded by public tender are well recognized. However, it is felt that minimum rates could be designated in contracts for the conveyance of material, provided by the contractor, from one location to another in cases where individual truckers perform this service. In this connection I have in mind the trucking of gravel supplied by a contractor and conveyed by individual truckers from one location to another, worked out on a per ton mileage basis.

The situation I wish to speak about is the tie-up that occurred at a Royal Canadian Air Force runway construction project at Chatham, New Brunswick. From December 29 last until January 29 the trucking of gravel for this R.C.A.F. project was tied up. Failure to arrive at a mutual agreement over a four week period disrupted many lines of business and aroused a keen interest among the public, with tangible evidence that local gravel truckers had the complete sympathy of the people in their request for a trucking rate at a level that had been established, recognized and paid for several years, as against an offer by the company holding the contract at a rate 42 per cent below the rate paid over a period of many years. The amount of gravel involved is 400,000 tons for an airstrip 10,000 feet long. The difference in dollars between

the established trucking rate and the rate first offered by the company was reported to be \$200,000.

When the crown company, Defence Construction Limited, awarded the contract to the lowest tenderer the tender price was considered low and it was stated unofficially that Defence Construction Limited was reluctant to award the contract at the low tender amount. However, as the required guarantee for the completion of the contract was provided the low tender was accepted.

When local truckers got in touch with the contractors they were offered a rate of 70 cents per ton which amounted to \$6.30 for a nine-ton load over a 43-mile round trip. Local truckers, members of the New Brunswick truckers association, refused the offer of 70 cents a ton on the basis that it was much below the long established and heretofore recognized rate.

For several years the minimum rate paid by provincial governments and by construction firms for trucking gravel, for the same distance and under the same conditions, has been \$1.21 per ton. A number of out-of-the-area trucks, non-members of the trucking association, were brought in and commenced hauling gravel at a rate reported to be 70 cents per ton. The local truckers established a picket line at the gravel pit, with the result that trucking operations were suspended. The tie-up continued for two weeks before any negotiations bore fruit. After two weeks, the contractors offered a rate of \$1 per ton, later followed by the offer of \$1.21 per ton. The trucking rate was finally agreed upon by both parties in the dispute as the provincial government established rate, which would be determined by the actual mileage involved, estimated at \$1.18 to \$1.24 per ton.

However, the rate agreed upon brought on the introduction of a rider by the contractor to the effect that for every local truck engaged the company would engage an out-of-the-area truck. The truckers association agreed to truck gravel at the provincial government rate and assured the contractors and Defence Construction Limited that there would be no delay in the conveyance of gravel to the project site. The truckers association also agreed that the contractors could use their 22 company trucks. However, the truckers association did not agree on the local and out-of-the-area truck for truck basis. It is estimated that between 80 and 100 trucks could be operated without danger of traffic tie-ups.

Public concern was expressed at the outset of the tie-up over the fact that the season's cut of logs was still in the woods,