

*Supply—Transport*

**Mr. Chevrier:** For instance, the question of highway transport is one which is under the jurisdiction of the provinces; and the question of international and interprovincial highways is one for agreement between the provinces. Then again it is a question which has been referred to two royal commissions already, namely the Duff commission and the Rowell-Sirois commission. Both of them pointed to the difficulty and indicated some of the solutions; but because it has been impossible to reach agreement with the provinces, the problem still remains. I do not know whether the provinces would be willing to reach agreement on that matter.

To deal with the matter more particularly, I say that the royal commission on transportation as now established has as its reference the general transportation problem in Canada. It may be that we can hope for some recommendation from them on that point.

**Mr. Coldwell:** In view of the situation that has developed, perhaps further discussions with the provinces might bring about some better understanding.

**Mr. Chevrier:** I should like to see that.

**Mr. Coldwell:** I have no doubt the government has it in mind. When the commission reports, no doubt some discussions will be held with the provinces with regard to the recommendations. I hope that something will come out of it. That is what I mean.

**Mr. Johnston:** I did not intend to discuss this question under this item; but as the question has arisen now, probably I shall be quite in order in what I am about to say. I agree that there should be some general over-all policy with regard to transportation in this country. It has been pointed out that the great discrimination in rates has affected different parts of the country. We out in the west particularly bear the brunt of that unfair competition; and it is my judgment that the time has come when there should be a thorough going-over of the transportation system of this country, particularly as it applies to the west.

My mind goes back immediately to a statement that was made by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier), and which was carried in an article appearing in the *Ottawa Citizen* of February 23, in which he outlined his view in regard to competition with the railways brought about by trucking. I am fearful lest the minister adopt the policy that was attributed to him in the quotation from the *Citizen* that I referred to when I spoke the other day. In that quotation he said he feared that competition from trucking would be a serious handicap to the railways. On that occasion

[Mr. Coldwell.]

he went so far as to say that the trucking business was operating beyond its economic radius. Out west we have only one source of competition with the railways. It is entirely different in eastern Canada, and it is also different in British Columbia. In eastern Canada there are the great lakes and the canal systems along the St. Lawrence river which offer fair competition in freight rates. In British Columbia they have the advantage of water transportation from Halifax and through the Panama canal up to British Columbia. That is a source of competition with the railways. In western Canada, and particularly in the western provinces, we have to depend on the competition of trucks to get us anywhere near a reasonable transportation rate.

**Mr. Bryce:** The trucks are bound by the policy of the public and utility boards to charged railway rates.

**Mr. Johnston:** Exactly. If the minister's ideas were correctly expressed in the *Ottawa Citizen* on February 23, then we can see a grave danger ahead for us, particularly in view of the increases already given to the railway companies, which affect us very materially in the west. I am wholeheartedly in favour of having a complete discussion of the freight rate structure carried on in the house. I should like to see a policy outlined which would benefit all of Canada, and not particularly one or two sections.

**Mr. Chevrier:** I do not want to enter into a discussion with my hon. friend on this subject at this time, because I know it could lead to some time being taken up in the house. I would like to suggest to him respectfully that he read the speech which I made. All he did was to read an article which was given to the press. If my hon. friend has not a copy of my remarks perhaps I can get him one.

**Mr. Johnston:** I have not a copy of the speech. I have to take what I saw in the press.

**Mr. Knowles:** I asked the minister to table it.

**Mr. Chevrier:** I think he should read the speech, and when the main estimates are up, or on some other occasion, I should be quite willing to enter into discussion with my hon. friend on the subject. At this juncture, if I may, I should like to say this, Mr. Chairman. If we go into a general discussion on transportation matters I am afraid the Minister of Finance will never get his estimates through. I do not think it was the intention that we should do that. These are specific items. I am prepared to deal with general items, if that is the wish of the house. I do not think