

*Transportation*

action the commission ought to take. I also refer to part of subsection 1 of the proposed new section 329 which reads in part as follows:

—at such level of rates; and the governor in council shall take such action as he deems necessary or desirable on the basis of that report to provide assistance to such railway companies.

I was concerned that under section 24 of the Financial Administration Act no payment could be made under that provision unless parliament authorized it. This is a matter of great consequence. It has been referred to in many speeches in this house and in western Canada, and it is the Magna Carta of the grain farmers of western Canada.

This matter should not be dealt with by way of estimates. I do not think we can change the act. I emphasize to the minister that the government in power in three years' time may wish to reconsider this matter. It may decide to take action and to make recommendations affecting the subsidy to the railways. The losses sustained in hauling grain and the like might be of such a magnitude that the matter should not be dealt with purely on the basis of an estimate before this house. There should be legislation, with the usual provision to refer the matter to a committee for full discussion and the calling of witnesses. There should be a total and complete examination of the subject.

Let me make clear what I am saying. It is not adequate, it is not acceptable and it would not be satisfactory to have an item in the estimates and simply dispose of the matter in this way. The matter ought to be determined by legislation. While this may come up in three years' time, there ought to be some caveat on the part of those representing the western farmers that this matter ought to be proceeded with in the form of legislative enactment.

**Mr. Schreyer:** Very briefly I wish to comment on the last speaker's remarks. I ask the minister, since the Crowsnest rates are statutory, whether any action taken in future pursuant to new section 329 would necessarily require the government to bring in legislation. Providing financial assistance would in effect modify the existing statutory provisions regarding the Crowsnest rates.

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I think the hon. member for Peace River is saying that there are two ways to make statutory payments. One way is by having an item in an appropriation bill which comes in by way of an estimate. Such a bill

[Mr. Baldwin.]

goes through as many stages as any other bill but it is not customary to debate it extensively. Of course I am in no better position than anyone else to say what would be done in a hypothetical situation by some future parliament or at a future session of this parliament. I think it would be difficult for any government to try to put an item in the estimates to deal with the matter in the way which has been suggested unless it happened just before the expiry of parliament and it was done for one year only with an undertaking that the next year a specific bill would be brought in for the purpose. None of us, perhaps fortunately, can tell how those who come after us will behave. We have enough difficulty deciding our own conduct. But I am sure the views which have been expressed will not go unnoticed by any government which has to deal with this matter in the future.

● (6:20 p.m.)

**Mr. Barnett:** Might I ask the minister whether he learned from his experience while he was leader of the house with regard to dollar items in the estimates?

**Mr. Pickersgill:** I hope I shall never be too old to learn.

**The Deputy Chairman:** May I ask the indulgence of the committee in order to make an announcement concerning the proceedings on the adjournment motion?

It is my duty, pursuant to provisional standing order 39A, to inform the house that the questions to be raised at the time of adjournment tonight are as follows: the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard), Post Office Department—alleged tampering with mail by Hudson's Bay Company; the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. MacRae), External Affairs—India—Reported unjust treatment of Canadian engineer; the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge), Canadian Centennial—Trail, B.C.,—Request for stop by centennial train.

**Mr. Pascoe:** Mr. Chairman, I think all hon. members from western Canada are pleased that once again the minister has placed on record the statement that there is no thought of changing the Crowsnest Pass rates. However, the following words appear in new section 329 (1):

Not later than three years after the coming into force of this section, the commission shall inquire into the revenues and costs of railway companies...attributable to the carriage of grain and grain products—