

commission. When the facts warrant it, the commission will take the evidence and look the situation over.

Mr. CRERAR: As far as filling the vacancy on the Board of Railway Commissioners is concerned, I was going to suggest to the Minister that we could probably get along very well without filling it, and save the expense. My own view has been that three members on the Board of Railway Commissioners, with the staff they have should be quite sufficient to discharge all the work that the Board has to do. As a matter of fact I think in the past the active work of the board has really devolved on two or three commissioners. I would earnestly commend to the Minister of Railways that he might well save a few thousand dollars by leaving this vacancy unfilled. In my judgment a board of three commissioners will function just as well as a board of six, and this is not a time when we can think of lightly spending money that it is not absolutely necessary to expend.

Item agreed to.

Board of Railway Commissioners for Canada: to pay expenses in connection with cases before the Board, \$5,000.

Mr. COPP: What is that for?

Hon. Mr. REID: This is to provide for the payment of counsel, expenses, and so forth, in any case in which the department might require to have a representative before the Railway Commission. Previous to 1920-21 an amount of \$15,000 was in the Estimates for this purpose. We have reduced that to \$5,000.

Mr. COPP: What was spent last year?

Hon. Mr. REID: Nothing. The item is only there in case something might turn up where it would be necessary to engage counsel.

Mr. CANNON: By the Government or by the commission?

Hon. Mr. REID: By the commission.

Mr. CANNON: Would the railway commissioners have to do with the payment of counsel?

Hon. Mr. REID: Some case might arise where they would require special counsel.

Mr. PARENT: My hon. friend from Dorchester (Mr. Cannon) mentioned that whenever a case comes before the Board of Railway Commissioners, the Canadian Pacific is always represented by counsel. Are we to infer that the Canadian Gov-

ernment railways also want to have their counsel present in the same way?

Hon. Mr. REID: The Canadian National railways would have to pay their own separate counsel. This is only in connection with the commission itself.

Mr. CANNON: How the commission itself? Has not the commission on its staff somebody in a position to give legal advice? We have just voted \$206,000 for the staff. Am I to understand that there is nobody on that staff in a position to give legal advice to the commission?

Hon. Mr. REID: There might be a case between the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian Northern, for instance, in which the public should be represented, and where it would be in the public interest that the commission should have an independent counsel. In cases of that kind they would have to engage counsel, but it is only in exceptional cases. The appropriation is very seldom used.

Mr. CANNON: I do not wish to show any lack of proper consideration for the Minister, but when he gives an explanation such as he has just given to the committee, I think the members have a perfect right to smile, and smile broadly. The minister said that counsel might be engaged in cases where it was in the public interest for the railway commission to do so, and he instanced a case between the Canadian Northern and the Canadian Pacific.

Hon. Mr. REID: They both might appear before the commission.

Mr. CANNON: But the people of this country are paying millions of dollars every year for their railways; either this railway is ours or it is not.

Hon. Mr. REID: There might be a case in connection with the Grand Trunk.

Mr. CANNON: The minister did not suggest the Grand Trunk, but even if he had, his argument would be no more applicable. For the last three or four years this House has been voting millions of dollars to acquire railroads. Every year the amount we have to pay increases and the Minister of Railways, who spends that money to buy railways—he certainly did spend the money, and I hope he has bought something with it—now comes before the committee this afternoon and tells us that we do not own the railway. I think that the people of this country are entitled to a clear explanation from the minister. If this railway belongs to us, the Government