

Q. Let me use as an illustration, as a point of departure, one simple fact of many that could be named. I am speaking from memory because I did not expect to use this, but I believe my memory is accurate in this respect. To bring 100 pounds of barbed wire from Montreal to Vancouver by freight it costs 75 cents. But to bring the same 100 pounds of barbed wire along the same route and drop it off at Edmonton, hundreds of miles short of Vancouver, costs \$1.98. That is over twice as much. Our whole freight rate structure is shot through with glaring inequities of this sort which are militating against the economic wellbeing of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in a way which it is almost impossible to believe could be brought about. You would grant that?—A. Yes. There is a lot of inconsistency there.

Q. Something that has an interesting bearing on this statement you have made thus far before the committee is this. There is what seems to be a competent Board of Railway Commissioners set up in Canada, whose business it is to act as referees, shall we say, over the whole matter of railway freight rates; and yet these men have allowed conditions of that sort to develop in the country. I would hesitate to go further into the matter, because we might get off the track. But if you will take the Saskatchewan submission to the Rowell-Sirois Commission and the Alberta submission, you will be greatly impressed by the inequities from which those people suffer. Yes, as you see, the whole thing has been put under a government railway commission. What assurance would we have, if our banking concerns of Canada were under such a commission, that the results would be any more equitable?—A. Mr. Blackmore, if I stay here long enough, I will almost begin to lose faith in the powers of government altogether. I do not want to.

Q. I do not want to either.—A. Along that particular line, you know, I can think of a man away back in 1927, 1928 and 1929, who was putting up a valiant fight for a group of people up in British Columbia. They had a mountain differential freight rate on feed grain. I am speaking of our friend here, Mr. McGeer.

Q. Yes, I know.—A. That thing dangled on for quite a number of years. I stepped into the office of the Board of Railway Commissioners one day and had a talk with Mr. Stoneman. I asked him, "What in the name of goodness hangs this thing up? He said, "We can get that rate reduced on feed grain at any time it is wanted to be reduced if a bill is brought in asking for that." "But," he says, "the dickens of it is, according to the manual that guides us, there is something else in it." That was mill feed. I said, "Do you mean to tell me if we eliminate mill feed, then a bill would be introduced there and there is no trouble?" He said, "You will not need a bill." He said, "The regulations are already here where we can make it apply." However, I think there was a bill brought in by one of the members for Vancouver; I do not remember who it was. He brought a bill in and cut out the mill feed, and the rate was reduced on feed grain. That does not say it should not be reduced on mill feed. There are a lot of inconsistencies; and I believe that there will continue to be a good many inconsistencies. But I believe, as you believe, Mr. Blackmore, that a good many of these things ought to be definitely overhauled, and that wherever there are glaring inconsistencies in these things, they should be removed. The unfortunate part of the thing is this. Our western farmers, Mr. Blackmore, seem to be very good fellows when we produce a tremendous quantity of wheat and produce a tremendous lot of products of different kinds. But if ever we get into a time of extremity, well, we seem like poor little sisters. That seems to be the general attitude, taking it over a period of time. I wonder if ever an investigation was made to find out to what extent the products of the west have been responsible for helping to build up the economy of the east. I think it would be quite a story.