

Transportation

Commission, which will have the right to sit in camera to hear evidence secretly and not divulge that evidence?

Surely when a committee has received information of that kind, that information will play a determining part in forming recommendations to be presented to the house, without divulging the information it receives in hearing evidence in private. Surely evidence given by a shipper in respect of conditions under which he is a captive shipper would be very pertinent and useful, but should be withheld because a competitive disadvantage might occur if it were made public. That is the purpose behind this amendment. I wanted to explain my position in this regard, while at the same time giving full credit to the hon. member for the position he has taken.

Mr. Pickersgill: Before the vote is taken perhaps I should just say that for the reason I gave the other day I do not feel I could possibly support the hon. gentleman's amendment. I am sure this house is competent to adopt a standing order which would have exactly the same validity as any statute in preventing the government from frustrating the desire of the house. I believe we must always preserve the position that this house is the master of its own rules.

I am not one of those who want to abolish the Senate, but I do not like that body making our rules. Having made them we would have to seek its consent to change them. What I would find even more objectionable, in view of our long history, would be to require the consent of the crown to change our rules. That is something absolutely contrary to everything that happened in England during the seventeenth century and to the whole struggle for responsible government in this country. For that reason I just could not possibly support the amendment, though I reiterate my support of the objectives set out by the hon. member for Peace River. I also agree in the main with the hon. member for York South about the hearing of testimony in secret.

• (9:10 p.m.)

The Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Amendment (Mr. Baldwin) negatived: Yeas, 30; nays, 62.

The Chairman: I declare the amendment lost.

Mr. Pickersgill: I assume, sir, that we will now go back to clause 50.

The Chairman: The committee will now resume discussion of clause 50.

On clause 50—*Crowsnest pass rates.*

Mr. Nasserden: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me it was quite a while ago that we were discussing this clause, and perhaps to place in proper context what we are discussing I should read part of the clause:

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 subject to the jurisdiction of parliament—

And so on. That passage is to be found on page 41 of the bill. A question I asked earlier today and the answer I received from the minister confirmed my fears that this section proposes a greater problem to the welfare of western Canada than the minister will have us believe by his light-hearted reference to the discussion that would take place in the House of Commons in any subsequent parliament that might be considering this whole matter. As I look at this section of the proposed act, I cannot help but feel that it should be removed, because it is unnecessary. I shall try to place on the record the reasons for my feeling this to be the case. If we go back in the past to the time when the Crowsnest pass rates were initiated and guarantees were made to the western provinces and those who produced grain in those provinces, we cannot but realize that at that time the volume of grain being handled, and even the prospect of grain that would be handled by the railways, was indeed a much smaller percentage than it is today. The volume, in terms of hundreds of thousands of bushels, was much less at that time than it is today and much less than it will be in the foreseeable future.

If we consider our railways systems in Canada today, those of us who come from the grain growing areas do not have to consider them very long to realize that the railways have been very, very slow in bringing in changes in the equipment that they use for the handling of grain, and the whole area in which they assemble their carloads at the various points. We realize that there could be a great improvement in this respect.

One of the reasons for the difficulty in this regard has been the fact that we still have relatively small grain elevators across western Canada. Nevertheless, there has not been that change in the composition of a grain handling