

DOMINION FRANCHISE BILL

FIRST READING

A message was received from the House of Commons with Bill 7, an Act to amend The Dominion Franchise Act.

The Bill was read the first time.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: As this is a Bill which—

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I know the Bill.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: —simply repeats the Act of last year, I would suggest that we put it down for second reading to-morrow.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Or to-night.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: With leave I would move that the Bill be placed on the Order Paper for second reading to-morrow.

The motion was agreed to.

DAIRY INDUSTRY BILL

FIRST READING

A message was received from the House of Commons with Bill 8, an Act to amend the Dairy Industry Act.

The Bill was read the first time.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Would my right honourable friend object to this Bill being put down for second reading to-morrow?

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: No, not at all; nor even to-night.

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: Then I would move, with leave, that it be placed on the Order Paper for second reading to-morrow.

The motion was agreed to.

TRANSPORT BILL

FIRST READING

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND introduced Bill B, an Act to establish a Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada, with authority in respect of transport by railways, ships, aircraft and motor vehicles.

He said: Honourable senators, I informed the Senate before we adjourned that this Bill was in preparation and would be brought before the House as soon as we resumed our sittings. As it may be necessary to send the Bill to a committee, I would ask leave to deviate from our usual procedure and make a few remarks in explanation of the measure now, with a view to having it put down for second reading to-morrow. If my right honourable friend is not ready to have it taken up to-morrow we can postpone the second reading to a later date.

As the Bill itself states, this is a measure to establish a Board of Transport Commissioners for Canada, which Board shall have authority in respect of transportation by railways, ships, aircraft and motor vehicles.

This Bill marks a further step in the development of transportation in Canada and the regulation of the same. As some honourable members of the Senate will recall, there was a time when transportation in Canada was largely a monopoly of the railways and there was no regulative control of rates, with the result that public demand for a regulative policy became somewhat insistent. In 1887 the United States Interstate Commerce Commission was granted regulative powers, and in the following year, when Canada had about 12,500 miles of railway in operation, the Railway Committee of Privy Council was given certain powers having to do with rate regulation. This arrangement seemed to satisfy public requirements until about 1898, when it became increasingly apparent that some other method was required to cope with the rapid extension of the railways and of trade and commerce; and after extended investigation, the Railway Act was amended in 1903 to provide for the organization of a Board of Railway Commissioners. The Board, established in 1904, is given very wide powers over railways constructed under federal authority, as well as over railways constructed under provincial authority, when such railways are declared by Act of the Parliament of Canada to be a work for the general advantage of Canada, while purely provincial railways connecting with or crossing Dominion railways are subject to the Board with respect to all such connections or crossings.

At first the membership of the Board was restricted to three commissioners, but four years later, in 1908, when our railway mileage was approximately 25,000, three more were appointed and the usefulness of the Board increased by an arrangement permitting it to be divided into two sections, each of which could sit independently, the decision of either section being, under the Act, the decision of the Board.

To the Board were transferred the powers previously exercised by the Railway Committee of Privy Council, and the Privy Council now does not deal with railway rate matters except on petition to the Governor in Council to review a particular judgment or order of the Board, with respect to which there is also appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada upon questions of jurisdiction.

We have now more than 42,000 miles of railway in Canada, and in recent years the railways have continued to serve the best interests of the Dominion as a whole in cir-