

Supply—Transport

that he can recommend to the Canadian National Railways that they meet this request. Some hon. members may have felt when I first raised the matter that it was a labour matter rather than a transport matter. As I have already indicated, if one were trying to get the law changed in a general way, it would be a matter to take up under labour. In this instance it seems to me the thing to do is to try to get the Canadian National Railways to meet the request of this particular group of people. I indicated in my letter to the minister that if he wanted to discuss the matter with me after he had studied it, or with any of the rest of us who are interested, we would be glad to go to see him. He might like to have the Minister of Labour there as well. But my hope is that the result of this study, as I have already indicated, will be that he will see the justice of the claim that these men are making and that he will be prepared to recommend approval of their request to the management of the Canadian National Railways.

Mr. Chevrier: I remember quite well the letter which the hon. gentleman sent me. If my memory does not fail me at the moment, it struck me at the time that there were two or three questions involved. First there was a legal question. And then there was a question of labour relations, and finally there was the interest of the Canadian National Railways. I read his letter carefully and thought the best thing I could do was first of all to ask the Canadian National Railways to let me have their comments on the suggestion put forward by my hon. friend. That I have done, and I have simply acknowledged his letter without comment until I am able to get the reply of the officers of the railways. That has not been forthcoming as yet. I presume they are preoccupied at the moment with the committee on railways and shipping, for which they are getting ready. But just as soon as I am able to get their reply and also to give some consideration to the two aspects that I have mentioned, I shall write to my hon. friend.

Mr. Knowles: I appreciate the position taken by the minister and I shall look forward to hearing from him when he gets that reply from the Canadian National Railways. I am wondering, however, just what the minister meant when he referred to the legal aspect of the matter.

Mr. Chevrier: I would have to have the letter before me. As I said a moment ago, I was speaking from memory. What struck me when I read the letter—and it was a fairly long one, if I remember aright—was that there were two aspects of the question.

[Mr. Knowles.]

One was a legal question as to the application of the Industrial Relations and Disputes Investigation Act and the other was as to labour relations.

Mr. Knowles: May I just suggest one other thought. I do this because I presume that, when this matter gets studied by the minister and by the department, today's *Hansard* will probably be looked at. Therefore if one has a point to make, now is the time to make it. My suggestion is this. I suggest that when the minister or his officials are studying this matter, they look up the debate which took place in this house when the labour code was before us. As a matter of fact, if my memory serves me aright, that debate took place on June 17, 1948. I do not presume to remember every date on which anything takes place, but I have reason for remembering that date very well and the Minister of Transport will remember it too. An extremely important amendment to the labour code went through on that date, one I had fought for for many years. In the debate of that day the minister will find that the then minister of labour discussed the position of these people who, by the terms of the labour code, are excluded from automatic recognition and the automatic right to collective bargaining. The point was that although these people, including the people involved in management functions, are excluded from that automatic right, still there is no law against that right being accorded to them by any employer who wishes to do so. It is that view of the former minister of labour which I wish the Minister of Transport would look at when he is assessing the legal aspects.

Mr. Chevrier: That was the question that was in my mind: whether or not an amendment to the act would be necessary in order to do what my hon. friend requested.

Mr. Knowles: That is exactly the point. I am glad the minister raised it; because when, on June 17, 1948, an attempt was made to amend the act with respect to architects, I believe, that amendment was defeated. The minister of labour said then that even though that amendment was defeated, even though architects were excluded from the automatic right to collective bargaining, there was nothing to prevent them from having it wherever their employers were willing to accord it to them. That is what I am hoping the Canadian National Railways will be prepared to do with regard to these railway supervisors.

Mr. Gibson: This afternoon when I mentioned this question of transportation of members of parliament, the minister did not give me any assurance that he was even