

able; but it was not until 1923 that an order in council was passed in that regard, and I think if the hon. member for Queens-Lunenburg will examine the matter more closely, he will find that that order in council is responsible for the situation as we have it to-day. If I said that myself and the hon. member for Queens-Lunenburg said the opposite, the people in the country might be disposed to accept his word as against mine. I do not know whether they would or not, and it would not make much difference, so I will call to the assistance of the point I am making a statement made by the present Minister of Railways and Canals. I confess I hardly know how to designate some of the ministers of the government at the present time, whether they are real or acting; but I refer to the Hon. Mr. Graham, and perhaps I can mention his name as he is not in the House. What did he say? Speaking at Kingsville, Ontario, on September 11th, as reported in the *Toronto Globe*, he said:

Up till 1921 when Mr. Meighen retired from office not a step had been taken to bring in the Grand Trunk system, the inclusion of which he had provided for, so that this government (the King government) found a statute barren of results, and the two great railway systems still operated by two separate boards, one with headquarters in Montreal, and the other with headquarters in Toronto. . . . The Intercolonial was not yet subjected to the control of the Board of Railway Commissioners in regard to rates. It was out of the combine.

But the government of my right hon. friend put it in. We in the Maritime provinces are not going to quibble as to who put it into the amalgamation. The burning question with us is: How soon is it going to be restored to the Maritime provinces?

Mr. CAMPBELL: Just what have the Maritimes to gain by separating the Intercolonial from the National railways?

Mr. FOSTER: I think we would be able to get at least a chance to put some of our products into the central markets of Canada and we would be able to get lower freight rates, which are what my hon. friends have been fighting for years and which this parliament gave them only a year or so ago. I am sure the people of the Maritime provinces feel that they have just as much right for consideration in that regard, particularly as their right is founded upon an implied contract under the terms of confederation.

Mr. EULER: Would the hon. gentleman advocate that the fixing of freight rates be removed from the jurisdiction of the railway commission?

[Mr. Foster.]

Mr. FOSTER: I am only too happy to answer my hon. friend that I would. I am glad that he has raised that point. I regard the railway commission as a great idea of the Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, as I have heard it spoken of as being a monument to him. I agree with that. There is no doubt the creation of the railway commission was a great idea and we have had some very able men on it; but what that commission lacks, according to my humble judgment, is a sufficient number of men who are able to understand railway auditing and traffic conditions combined. I would be delighted if hon. gentlemen would examine into the formation of that commission and find out how large is that particular department of it and whether it is functioning in that regard. What makes me ask that question? The fact is that in the last five to ten years, we have had increases in freight rates in this country of ten per cent, twenty-five per cent, fifteen per cent, and forty per cent. Does any hon. gentleman think that one man, however able he may be, can sit on the Board of Railway Commissioners and, by looking up into the skies, say that an increase of forty per cent in freight rates in all sections of this country is a proper thing to stimulate industry and to enable people to carry on and make a living? When you go into the realm of experts, the experts who lay the foundation of freight structures are so expert that the average man does not know what freight structures are nor how to interpret them. I hope I have not said anything that reflects upon the able men on the railway commission; but I repeat that if we are to remain in the amalgamation with ten per cent, fifteen per cent, twenty-five per cent and forty per cent increases in rates on our products in the Maritime provinces under the aegis of the Board of Railway Commissioners, then I unhesitatingly say: Take the Intercolonial railway out of the control of the Board of Railway Commissioners and we shall have a chance to reduce our rates in the Maritime provinces.

Mr. EULER: If the hon. gentleman would suggest that the fixing of rates be taken from the railway commission, what plan would he adopt? To whom would he entrust the fixing or making of rates?

Mr. FOSTER: If my hon. friend will induce those sitting alongside of him to resign their portfolios and to hand the reins of government over to this side of the House, I shall be glad to sit on the fringes of this party to which I give my allegiance and to contribute whatever I may be able to do, and I will not ask anybody to give me a portfolio.