

Atlantic Regional Freight Assistance Act

Mr. Jamieson: I am not sure of the gist of my hon. friend's question. There is no assistance whatsoever in respect of goods moving from western Canada into the Atlantic provinces.

Mr. Thomson: My question referred to the reverse situation. Is the minister aware that if freight assistance is given in respect of products moving westward into Quebec and Ontario there will be opposition from the Ontario and Quebec vegetable growers and pressure to keep these freight subsidies from going into effect for that reason?

Mr. Jamieson: I suppose that is so, Mr. Chairman, but there has been a 100-year effort the other way around. There has been all manner of assistance provided in central Canada in respect of goods moving into the Atlantic provinces. Furthermore, there is really no significant difference here other than we are providing the same kind of assistance that has prevailed. We are simply making it available to trucking as well as to rail transportation. I do not think it will be significant in that way.

Clause agreed to.

On Clause 4—*Reduced rate for compensation.*

Mr. Nowlan: My question is related to clause 4(2) which is intended to give some assistance in respect of express traffic westbound out of the select territory. I am looking for what is perhaps only clarification of this clause. Was this measure requested by the premiers in their brief or during discussions with the minister and will this benefit the railways or will it be passed on to the shippers?

I am informed that the railway people feel at the present time that although they do not get the subsidy, the E.T.A. 100 rate schedule reflects the M.F.R.A. outbound rate. In view of this I am wondering whether this assistance will be of any benefit to the shippers. If my information is correct that the outbound express traffic under the E.T.A. 100 rate schedule reflects in fact the potential effect the M.F.R.A. is going to have in reducing the rates charged by the rail company to the shipper, will this benefit in fact be passed on to the shipper? Has there been any discussion with the minister and the rail people about whether this actually going to result in a reduction in outbound rates to the shipper?

Since this is going to help the outward passage of express traffic, what is going to be the

[Mr. Thomson.]

position of the railways in regard to the intra-movement of express traffic? If we do find that there is a reduction in the cost of westbound express traffic in view of the relationship between the E.T.A. 100 rate schedule and the M.F.R.A., will the railways then turn around and increase the express rate for intra-movement? How is that situation going to be covered?

• (12:50 p.m.)

Mr. Jamieson: Mr. Chairman, I am sure my hon. friend knows that you cannot take care of a thing like that in legislation. You have to take the whole freight tariff, the truck tariff, all the shipping and everything else and incorporate it in the act. I suggest the only thing we can do is make as much provision in general terms as we can and then hope, as my hon. friend said in his opening comments, that we wind up with a competitive system which will be the most meaningful way of correcting the anomalies to which the hon. member referred. I do not think I can answer him any more specifically. If he wants to spend a few hours or even days with the authorities on the question of broad tariffs—I am sure he knows how complicated they are—I could arrange it for him.

Clause agreed to.

On clause 5—*Power to vary or remove rates.*

Mr. Thomas (Moncton): Mr. Chairman, when I spoke on this bill last Tuesday I said that I welcomed the introduction of the legislation because it was at least an attempt to correct some of the problems with which we in the Atlantic region have been plagued for the last 100 years. I also pointed out that I would accept the bill in principle strictly on the basis that it was an interim measure. I re-emphasize that today. This bill will give slight relief to certain shippers in the area, but it will do very little to correct or eliminate some of the transportation problems that have been with us for so long.

The reason we on this side of the house are suspicious of the so-called interim nature of the bill is found in the clause we are now considering. Many speakers have expressed the view that clause 5 is a bad one, that it sets a dangerous precedent. The hon. member for Halifax-East Hants on Tuesday expressed it very well when he said he objected very strongly to the inclusion of clause 5 in a bill