

*Unemployment Continuance Act*

Mr. VENIOT: Then if they did, why did one railway more than another refuse to give the prices? It was not until 1930 that the two railways got together owing to depressed conditions.

Mr. MANION: I am informed differently. The management of the Canadian National Railways informed me that they have always done this, at least for some years, and certainly long before 1930.

Mr. LAPOINTE: There is a great difference between the two situations. With the position taken by the government and by its predecessor, that it would not be in the public interest that the Canadian National Railways should be compelled to divulge the prices paid for articles purchased by the railways in the ordinary course of administration, I entirely agree. It is a sound principle and I think it would be unfair to the Canadian National Railways if they were forced to divulge such prices. But surely that is not the situation to-day; the Canadian National Railways do not purchase these ties in the ordinary course of their operations. My hon. friend says that they were declining to buy any ties; they did not need any. They were given authority by this government to purchase these ties subject to the understanding that the government would pay for them out of the relief money provided for by this act. This is money which is voted by parliament, not by way of estimates but by special statute authorizing the government to spend certain sums for the purpose of relieving unemployment, and this committee has the right to have all the details precisely as if the money had been voted by an estimate. It cannot do any harm to the railways, nor can it give any advantage to their competitors. This is money given by the people of Canada to relieve unemployment, and surely we have the right to know how that money has been spent, who supplied the ties, and what prices were paid for them. Under the understanding given last session, the pledge given to parliament, we certainly have the right to request that all these particulars should be given the committee.

Mr. MANION: I do not see where the difference comes in. We have given information as regards what we have done or what we shall do with the money voted by parliament. We are giving certain money to the Canadian National Railways with which to buy ties, and they make their contracts exactly as they have done in the past. They make

[Mr. Manion.]

arrangements with dealers precisely as they have done heretofore and I know no reason why we should insist on their giving this year such details as they have refused to give in past years. So long as parliament knows that the money has been handed over to the Canadian National Railways, as it will know, unless there is a desire to attack the Canadian National Railways for the way in which they have spent it, there is no more reason for giving details this year than there was in the past. The hon. member for Quebec South asked a question in regard to the prices of ties. I am going to give the average prices paid in the past years, from 1923 on:

	Cents
1923.. . . . .	74
1924.. . . . .	79
1925.. . . . .	80
1926.. . . . .	76
1927.. . . . .	72
1928.. . . . .	78
1929.. . . . .	76
1930.. . . . .	75
1931.. . . . .	64
1932.. . . . .	52

The highest price paid was 80 cents, which was paid in 1925, and the lowest price paid between 1923 and 1932, a period of ten years, was the price paid this year. Surely it does not look as though there was anything to find fault with unless it is that the price is too low; certainly it has not been too high. May I add that private companies like the Canadian Pacific Railway Company are not asked to give the details as to the people with whom they make their contracts or as to the different companies with whom they deal, and I do not think the Canadian National Railways should be put in a different position.

Mr. POWER: As I understand the precedents cited a few moments ago by the minister, they were to the effect that the government had power to give the names of the persons who had dealt with the Canadian National Railways but had not the power to give the prices paid for the goods. Did I understand the minister correctly?

Mr. MANION: That is apparently what was done in the past; the names were given.

Mr. POWER: Will the hon. minister give the committee the names?

Mr. MANION: I have not the names before me; I will make inquiries and if I can obtain them I have no objection to giving this information to the committee.

Mr. VENIOT: The minister should have them.