

*Freight Rates Reduction Act*

in my craw and in those of many of my colleagues that in this house we should lambaste a measure that is brought forward and then vote for it. This is one of the predicaments of opposition members. Yet both the temptation and almost a need to vote against a measure such as this are very strongly upon us at the present time.

When a minister brings any measure before the house there are a number of different techniques or ways that he can use. He can be completely honest and candid in revealing the details, history and purposes of the legislation. Within that mode he can use subterfuge or a pleasant manner or many other ways in order to get the agreement of the house to the passage of the particular piece of legislation. In a nutshell, Mr. Chairman, it is our feeling that this piece of legislation reflects the bankruptcy and disgraceful lack of policy of this government in connection with transportation as a whole and the railways in particular.

We feel that some of the points raised by the hon. member for Laurier are relevant, although I think perhaps he overdid the question; because in my view it is irrelevant whether the subsidies under this legislation go directly into wages. I think the answer there is that the wages come out of the total revenue position of the railways and that is that. There is no doubt in our minds that originally the Freight Rates Reduction Act was designed to meet a specific problem. The scale of the bankruptcy has been revealed repeatedly in the fact that the government has not come to grips with a single problem relating to railway transportation. The very enormity of their failure can be seen in the lobbying to which I think every member of the house is being subjected at the present time by the trucking industry in relation to the recommendations of the MacPherson report and in relation to legislation such as this.

The bankruptcy of government policy is revealed in the recently published volume three of the studies of the royal commission on transportation. When the government appointed the commission it was made very clear that no matter what part of railway problems the commission might delve into there was one area in which they should make no recommendations because the government was setting that aside, and that was the question of the statutory grain rates. The other area that the commission decided at its very first hearing that it was not going to touch and with regard to which it would make no recommendations had to do with the labour wage structure. Therefore right at the start

[Mr. Fisher.]

the commission began with impediments to arriving at a really clear answer to the transportation needs of this country.

Nothing is more laughable, having regard to the kind of jackpot the government has got us into, than to look at some of the titles of the articles in the third volume of the report of the royal commission on transportation. I think every member is entitled to that volume. I should like to point out, for example, that there is an article by one of the chief advisers to the commission, Mr. D. H. Hay, on the problem of grain costing. There is another long section by E. P. Reid on statutory grain rates. We have a long article, from which I hope to read some quotations, by Mr. A. K. Eaton, a well known figure in Canada on tax questions, and not too long ago he was an adviser of the government. It is entitled "Comments on Proposals by Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways regarding statutory and related rates on grain and grain products in western Canada."

I know the experts on this commission sat down to settle some of the problems in relation to railways, but they could not get away from the statutory grain rates because so much of the evidence pouring forth from the railways and provincial groups from the west related to statutory grain rates. Where does this government stand in that respect? We have the statement by the Prime Minister at the time of the setting up of the MacPherson commission that these rates were to be outside their recommendations, but the consequences of those recommendations must be viewed in relation to the statutory grain rates.

The paradox is that even with the MacPherson royal commission report, for which we have waited so damned long, we have no true policy from that commission and we have no indication at all that the present government is going to implement an over-all policy. We have volume 1 of the report which contains the main recommendation, and the government has been a darned long time considering it. How else can one describe such a situation except in terms of bankruptcy of policy and ideas? I would almost go so far as to say bankruptcy in terms of ability to meet the problem and the incapacity to come forward with any kind of clear statement on transportation policy.

This is much more than just a question of freight rates in this specific case. It relates to inter-relationship of the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National Railways in air competition and competition with long haul trucks. The whole matter is tied in with passenger problems and this ties in with air competition between T.C.A. and C.P.A. lines.