

Now, membership on this board, I admit, demands a high standard of qualification. I believe that the duties devolving upon the members of the Railway Board are of equal difficulty, in many respects, with those devolving upon the Supreme Court. A member of this board needs to be of Supreme Court calibre, perhaps not in legal attainments, but certainly in general mental qualification. But I am not one of those who believe or fear with the hon. member for members for Red Deed, Provencher, and Humboldt, that men of that calibre cannot be found in the ranks of our western farmers. There are men among these western farmers who are quite competent to fill the position if the government will make a choice among them. Believing that, knowing it as a matter of actual knowledge, I should be derelict in my duty did I not vote for this resolution. The hon. member for Humboldt strikes the key note when he says that a man familiar with western conditions will best be able to perform the duties. The hon. member for Red Deer states that we should know no class, no locality, in this matter. But he is a supporter of the government that has always followed the principle which has been recognized ever since confederation, that one member of the cabinet should come from this section and another from that. We only ask for the extension of that principle to the Railway Board. How can the hon. member for Red Deer logically support the one position if he is not prepared to support the other? What is the principle that is thus recognized? It is that a member from New Brunswick better understands New Brunswick conditions, that a member from British Columbia better understands the conditions of that province. Similarly, on the Board of Railway Commissioners a member who has had to do with railway conditions in a given province will better understand the needs of that province.

On that principle I support the resolution, which requires that one man at least should hold a seat on that board who understands the distinctive features of transportation in the western country. Now how can the hon. member for Humboldt (Mr. Neely) support that feature of the resolution and fail to go further and support the feature which calls for the appointment of a farmer? If a man from New Brunswick, or a man from the west, for that matter, is better qualified to speak for the west, to legislate for the west, why then is not a man who comes from the farm, and who has devoted twenty or thirty years to practical farming, not better qualified to speak for the farmer in the deliberations of that board? There is no logic whatever in the position taken by the hon. member for Humboldt. What we ask is that, other things being equal, a qualified farmer be appointed to

Mr. MEIGHEN.

the board, on the principle that the farmers, so numerous in this country, have a right to be represented there. Now what are the problems that come up for decision on that board? A large proportion of them concern the farmers more directly than any other class of people. More than one-half of the time of that board is taken up with questions involving the interests of the farmers, on the one hand, and sometimes altogether. That board, since the death of Mr. Greenway, six months ago, has been without any man who understands class interests, and this resolution demands that that state of affairs be remedied by the selection of a farmer. Now the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Clark) says also that the member for Souris proved too much, when he proved that a farmer could better understand farming conditions than any other man, because he said, if that principle were carried out, the farmers would not have elected the member for Souris, who is a doctor, to represent that constituency. Now surely a resolution like this demands more serious consideration than that at the hands of this House, it demands the exercise of some degree of reason. We all admit that conditions may not be equal in all cases, and that it would be possible for the constituency of Macdonald, or the constituency of Souris, to send a farmer to this House who would not make a desirable representative, but we are not prepared to admit that in sending the present members they are not sending the best men they can find. Now I desire to be understood, I would not for a moment advocate any appointment to the Board of Railway Commissioners which would lessen the efficiency of that board. I would not do anything to lessen the efficiency of that board, even at the demand of the Grain Growers' Association, or of any other body of men, but I believe that a condition now exists in which the interests of the Grain Growers' Association, as well as of the municipalities and the farmers, can be consulted, and the efficiency of that board not be interfered with at all, and for that reason I shall support the resolution. And I further say that he who votes the other way at this time, acknowledging the immense interests as members have freely acknowledged, to be represented by the character of appointment aimed at, proclaims to his country and to his constituents by that vote, that in his opinion there is no practical western farmer qualified to measure for the office, and he must take the full responsibility for that position.

Mr. W. M. MARTIN (Regina). Representing as I do a western constituency, and a constituency whose electors are for the most part farmers, I must necessarily take