

mission, and gave unstintedly of his splendid business ability in its service. So great was his devotion to his country and to his country's cause in the war, that I am sure if he had had the opportunity to choose the circumstances under which he would pass away, he would have chosen to die in the service of the country he loved and while working in the cause which lay so near to his heart.

The Bill provides for the creation of a Central Purchasing Commission under which in future the purchase of all supplies for the Government will be made. As I have pointed out, under the existing Orders in Council purchases were made under the direction and control of the commission and each department continued its existing purchasing staff. The commission did not consider it desirable to disturb the existing staffs, as the War Purchasing Commission was of a temporary character, and when it was formed they thought that probably when the war was over pre-war conditions would again prevail. But now that it has been decided to make the War Purchasing Commission a permanent organization, there is no longer any reason for maintaining the existing staffs of all the departments, and the object of the Bill is to centralize the purchasing for all the branches of the Government in one purchasing commission. The members of the House know that all great business concerns of the present day have long since centralized their purchasing in order to obtain the very best results for the moneys expended. Some of the benefits that will result from centralized purchasing in such a business body as this will be, first, that instead of purchasing a certain quantity of supplies for one department, this Purchasing Commission will ascertain from all the departments the total quantities of supplies of any given article which they require and will thus be able in one purchase to secure all the articles of any given class which all the branches of the Government may require. In purchasing under these conditions the commission should, and no doubt will, obtain in many cases all the desired supplies at a lower price than would be possible in the purchase of smaller quantities by different departments. There will be an advantage in having a body of men devoting their whole attention to the business of purchasing Government supplies. Purchasing to-day has become almost a science in the large business concerns of the country. Men of the highest ability are appointed to this responsible task in order that the institutions with

which they are connected may obtain the benefit of their skill and ability. In making purchases in this way the Government will have the benefit of a thoroughly efficient organization. I am sure that members of the House will be interested to know what the total purchases of the Government amount to from year to year. During the past two or three years purchases have, of course, been enormous. Purchasing under normal conditions would not be on as large a scale as during the war years. But it must also be borne in mind that during the war years the purchase of supplies for many departments has been on a very limited scale. Some departments have been keeping the purchase of supplies down to the lowest limit and when normal conditions return the volume of supplies required by these branches of the Government will be substantially larger than the volume required during the period of the war. The estimate of the commission is that the annual purchases for the Government will be not less than \$40,000,000. They have been much more than that during the war period.

Mr. PARDEE: Why is the Railway Department excepted?

Mr. ROWELL: It is not. Only the Canadian National railways are excepted. As a railway organization, including the Canadian Northern, they have their own purchasing branch, but the Railway Department comes under this Bill, as do all other departments.

Hon. Mr. FIELDING: Can the minister give us any reason why the Railway Department is excepted? The Railway Department is a department of the public service of Canada. The people pay its bills and why should a distinction be made between it and any other?

Mr. ROWELL: The hon. member must have misunderstood me. The Railway Department does come under this Bill, but the Canadian National Railways do not.

Mr. FIELDING: Well, are not the Canadian National railways a part of the public service of Canada? Wherein do they differ from any other branch of the public service?

Mr. ROWELL: They do not differ from any other branch of the public service so far as relates to the desirability of purchasing supplies at the best possible price and on a purely business basis. But the opinion of the War Purchasing Commission, who were requested by the Gov-