

*The Address—Mr. Johnston*

indicated at that time that was his plan, and I think that showed good judgment on his part.

I also indicated to the minister on that occasion that care would have to be taken as to the regulations respecting trucking. I was of the opinion at that time that the government might endeavour to interfere with the free exercise of trucking privileges in Canada, and I was not mistaken. There are two reasons why I am concerned about this matter. In eastern Canada there is some competition for the railways particularly in the transportation of freight. You have the St. Lawrence river, the great lakes and the canals involved in that waterway system which offer effective competition to the railways. In western Canada we do not have anything like that. The only competition we can hope for there is that in time trucking will become a more effective competitor. I think such a hope is only natural, and trucking should be allowed to provide fair and reasonable competition to the railways.

I think the people of Canada are justified in concluding that one of the reasons why the trans-Canada highway was put off for the last twenty years was to protect the railways of Canada. Goodness knows they are getting enough protection from the government as it is. I find that my suspicions are verified. I have here a clipping from the *Ottawa Citizen* of February 23. The heading of the article is:

Says issue on highways prejudged.

The article reads:

G. M. Parke, president of the Automotive Transport Association of Ontario, said yesterday the federal government "prejudged" the issues being studied by the royal commission on transportation. Mr. Parke, addressing the convention of the Ontario good roads association, referred to a speech here Monday by transport minister Chevrier. He quoted Mr. Chevrier as saying: "I think that the present-day development of highway trucking is a very serious threat to the well-being of our railway system."

Surely the railways are not afraid of a little free competition. Are they trying to drive trucks off the roads so that they will be able to hoist their rates another 10 or 20 per cent as they have just recently? It seems that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Chevrier) is assisting them. Then he goes on:

If it is left unchecked it will undoubtedly impair the efficiency of our railroads and destroy the economic advantages which we still enjoy . . .

I would not like the impression to prevail that I am advocating the complete curtailment of highway trucking operations . . . but I am equally convinced that trucking has gone beyond its economic radius of operation, so much so that it has contributed in no small measure to the thorny transportation problem which faces Canada today.

It is clear that the minister has in mind exactly what he wants to do. He says he

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does not want to completely curtail trucking; but he also says it has gone beyond its economic radius of operation. Who is he to judge in that regard? The only people who can decide that are the truck transport associations themselves. When they begin to operate beyond the economic radius of operation they will soon find it out from their returns, and will cut down that radius. There is no doubt in my mind but that this government intends to limit the radius of operation of trucks so they will not even give fair competition to the railways, and will not be able to operate beyond a radius of fifty miles; and what would be the result? It would mean that if a person living in Calgary wanted to move his furniture to Edmonton, it would have to be done by rail. At the present time a truck will come to your door, load all your furniture, even though you have a five or six-roomed house, deliver it the same day in Edmonton, and unload it at your other house. The Minister of Transport takes the view that this would be uneconomical. What a lot of rubbish. We had better face the issue while it is clearly before us. It is clear that this government, through the Department of Transport, is going to hamstring trucking in this country in order to benefit the railways. I think that is something about which this House of Commons should be very careful. They should see to it that industry has a chance to operate unmolested by the federal government sticking its nose into things it knows nothing about.

Now I want to say just a few words about old age pensions; I would not like this opportunity to pass without having something to say with respect to the elderly citizens of our community. I am pleased to see the motion on the order paper to have this matter sent to a committee, where it can be gone into thoroughly and from which recommendations may be brought back. I believe the time has come when we should begin to delve into this problem, and should start treating these elderly people as human beings. I have often thought one of the best ways to find out whether or not the old age pensioners were receiving enough to maintain a decent standard of living would be to have members of this house limit their budgets to the amount allowed for old age pensions. If that were done I am sure there would be no need for a single speech in this house to urge that old age pensions be sufficient to keep body and soul together.

The Social Crediters have always maintained that old age pensions should be given as a right of citizenship when a person reaches the age of sixty-five. I firmly believe that it should be on a non-contributory basis. Let no one think for a moment that the old age