

*Supply—Transport*

rates should not be the same as those applying on shipments from other ports in Canada. The captains who sail these seas back me up in that contention.

Item agreed to.

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Payments to or for veterans and dependents—

627. War veterans allowances—further amount required, \$60,000.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Could items 627 and 628 stand? The hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra has been here all afternoon but has been called away and will return momentarily.

Item stands.

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

Government-owned enterprises—deficits—

630. Additional amount in excess of the sum of \$1,159,000 already appropriated, to provide for the payment during the fiscal year 1949-50 to the Canadian National Railway Company (hereinafter called the national company) upon applications approved by the Minister of Transport, made from time to time by the national company to the Minister of Finance, and to be applied by the national company in payment of the deficit (certified by the auditors of the national company) in the operation of the Prince Edward Island car ferry and terminals arising in the calendar year 1949—further amount required, \$62,230.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Chairman, I suppose that under any one of these items reference may be made to the Canadian National Railways?

**Mr. Abbott:** I would think that item 632 would be the most appropriate.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** I shall restrict my remarks to just one phase of the operations of the Canadian National Railways. It has to do with a matter I brought to the attention of the Minister of Transport on one or two other occasions, as far back as July 2, 1947. I am not one of those who follow a course in the house of asking for expenditures to be made by the government and then, the expenditures having been made, rising subsequently to object because taxation is high. Any suggestions I have made concerning expenditures have been with respect to developments of a national character that will pay dividends.

I now want to bring to the attention of the minister a matter that is of transcendent importance to the employees of the Canadian National Railways, having to do with the improvement of the situation regarding their pensions, as provided for under the Canadian National pension fund. I speak particularly for the employees in the lower brackets, and I ask the support of hon. members in all parts of the house in behalf of those employees. On November 12 last a question

was asked as to the number of retired employees of the Canadian National Railways in receipt of pensions of less than \$25 a month. That question was asked by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, and similar questions have been asked on one or two occasions by myself as well. According to the figures brought down then there are in this country 55 retired employees of the Canadian National receiving less than \$25 a month, and some 2,743 receiving only the basic pension of \$25. Those receiving between \$25 and \$30 a month number 841. Between \$30 and \$39.99 per month the number is 664, and some 354 receive between \$40 and \$50.

**Mr. Knowles:** I wonder if the hon. member would permit an interruption at that point. Similar questions were answered today, showing that in the lower brackets the situation is a little worse. It so happens that the 55 who were getting less than \$25 a month are now down to 31, no doubt owing to deaths, but the group getting only \$25 has gone up in number to 2,952.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** The hon. gentleman received replies to certain questions today that are generally similar to the statistics I gave as of November last, except that the situation has been intensified in respect to the number in receipt of the basic pension only.

When I brought this matter to the attention of the minister almost three years ago he stated that the attention of the board which looks after the administration of the pension scheme for the Canadian National would be directed to the representations made. I have no doubt the minister carried out that pledge, but it is apparent that nothing has been done to remedy the situation. It is a serious matter for the employees of the railway who, receiving the lower salaries, are unable to make provision for their own security. Indeed, those receiving this basic pension of \$25 a month find that when they reach the age of seventy they are definitely prejudiced as compared with those who receive old age pensions at that age. After the basic pension is allowed for and a valuation of the property owned by the pensioner has been arrived at, in many cases the individual railwayman is denied a portion of, if not the entire, old age pension.

The basic pension paid by the Canadian National Railways is both picayune and inadequate. I am sure no one in this country, neither the government nor the people who own this railway, would have any objection to the payment of a fair and reasonable basic pension in place of that which prevails. In