

Supply—Transport

Mr. Coates: Does the minister not consider that this is a very important matter and something that the house should be informed of as quickly as possible? Certainly the people should know whether the Board of Broadcast Governors as it is now set up under the law will be considering this application.

Mr. Pickersgill: I can say this. I feel that having regard to our parliamentary timetable there is not much prospect of having any fundamental amendments to the Broadcasting Act at a very early date. Therefore we should carry on in the best possible way under the broadcasting legislation we now have, and we certainly are not carrying on in the best possible way unless the permanent positions on the Board of Broadcast Governors are filled.

I hope there will be no undue delay in filling them because I must say I agree—I want to be careful here—with the spirit of the hon. gentleman's inquiry. I do think that in view of the great importance that is attached to this matter—and I understand why people have attached a great deal of importance to this matter—I would not be very happy to have it come before a board that had only one permanent member. I should like to make that point very clear.

Mr. Winkler: We have a list of names for you, Jack.

Mr. Rynard: Mr. Chairman, I should like to ask the minister whether an engineering survey accompanied the application for channel 5.

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not like to answer questions to which I do not personally know the answers. I do not think these applications are accepted without such a survey but I would have to find out.

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Such modesty.

Mr. Gilbert: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the minister would answer one more short question? I am sure we appreciate the fullness of his answers and his intention to protect the people of Toronto and Barrie, but I should like to know what the minister has to say about this matter. On the assumption that the final decision is to be made by the cabinet, to which the minister will give some direction, how does the minister feel about the two recommendations in the Fowler report, first that restraint should be used with regard to issuing licences for a period of at least five years and, second that the decision

with regard to issuing licences should rest in a new authority rather than in cabinet?

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, the hon. gentleman, who spoke in a quite engaging way the other day in the house, has asked me a question that I think, having regard to our parliamentary traditions, it would be very wrong for me to answer. The government of Canada, of which I happen temporarily to be a member—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pickersgill:—under our system of responsible government is considering this matter and for me to express an opinion now would either be a piece of arrogance, because I would be assuming that all my colleagues were puppets and I was deciding the matter, or it would be a piece of foolishness because the decision might very well be the opposite of the one which I would now give off the top of my head. There is a provision in our rules that hypothetical questions should not be asked or answered. This is a hypothetical question so I will plead the rules.

Mr. Herridge: Mr. Chairman, I wish to make a few brief observations and I shall try to remain in order and talk about transportation. The first thing I shall do is make a few observations with respect to the transportation of the minister's present Parliamentary Secretary from the Department of Labour to his present department. I must say I am very pleased that the Parliamentary Secretary is in the house because I have been asked to raise this question by persons who have read a very interesting article which appeared in the press and by others, and I think in fairness to him it is only right that he should be present. We look forward later to his rising and replying to this question. Mr. Gerald Waring in his "Ottawa Report" of recent date had this to say:

The P.M. also tried to fire Jim Byrne, parliamentary secretary for labour, to make room for another British Columbia M.P., Ron Basford. But Byrne, rock-hard hardrock miner from Trail, refused to be bumped. Either he kept his job, or Pearson needn't count on Jim Byrne's vote in the house. So Byrne has become (parliamentary secretary) to Pickersgill, and Basford still waits in the wings.

● (5:30 p.m.)

This has caused a good deal of interest in the part of the country from which I come and I was asked to raise the point, you see.

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder if I could ask the hon. gentleman to which of the items in my estimates he relates this extraordinary piece of gossip?