

*Freight Rates*

cost of living. Some people say that in its ultimate impact upon the consumer this 21 per cent will amount to perhaps 50 per cent after goods go through the hands of the various people who must handle them. Of course I do not mean an increase of 50 per cent in the cost of living, but 50 per cent in that cost to the extent that it is effected by freight rates.

It is a source of satisfaction to the western farmer that grain rates are not affected, but the other day in the house I made a discovery which may mean that things are not quite as good as they seem. The rumour is that the railways are holding that increases can be made in connection with back hauls and out-of-line hauls, while the rates for regular hauls remain the same. As I understood it, the whole grain freight rate structure on the prairies was to be left unchanged, and surely back hauls and out-of-line hauls are part of that structure. As such I believe they are outside the scope of this order and should remain untouched.

I blame the government for its ready and cheerful acceptance, and its immediate imposition, of this award by the board of transport commissioners. I blame the government for its refusal to intervene. When Premier Douglas and the premiers of the other provinces who oppose this increase applied to the dominion government in a proper and civil manner to have the heavy increase withheld until such time as they had an opportunity to present their case, they were justified in doing so, and I do not think the dominion government was justified in the refusal in which it persisted. I have a clipping here from the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* giving the comment of Premier Douglas on this refusal:

There could be no possible harm in withholding the imposition of the new rates until the provinces had an opportunity to exercise their right of appeal.

I think that is a reasonable statement. The government is interested in the political repercussions. No one could tell me a few days ago that this freight rate question had not become a matter of major political importance. The minister is usually so astute I did not see how he could be so naive, when he made that categorical refusal of government intervention, as to think for a moment he could get away with it; because, while to some extent it is a statistical and financial problem, this business of freight rates, particularly when it comes to inequalities and injustices, is a human matter, a social matter, a matter which in itself is intrinsically political, and political it has turned out to be.

[Mr. Knight.]

In that connection I might give another western opinion, this time from a newspaper which usually follows what I might describe, in the vernacular, as the government line. That is an expression I do not like, but I cannot think of a better one at the moment. I am quoting from an editorial which appeared in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* of April 9:

The federal government has promptly implemented the unfortunate decision of the board of transport commissioners—

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order. Probably I should read a reference from Beauchesne, third edition, on reading from newspapers or articles emanating from outside the house. I refer to citation 265:

It is not in order to read articles in newspapers, letters or communications emanating from persons outside the house and referring to, or commenting on, or denying anything said by a member or expressing any opinion reflecting on proceedings within the house.

I would ask hon. members to govern themselves accordingly in their remarks.

Mr. KNIGHT: With all deference, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that this comment has to do with the government, not with the house.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: From the opening words I understood that it referred to the debate now taking place in this house.

Mr. KNIGHT: I shall not quote further from it, but will simply say on my own that I think the government committed a major political blunder. I take it that statement would be in order, whether or not hon. members agree.

Perhaps the government will do something. I have suggested previously that the government has now some reason for doing something. There was a tremendous rebellion within the government's own ranks. That rebellion was more vocal when no vote on the issue was expected, but I noticed that when the leader of the C.C.F. party brought the matter into the open so that there would have to be a vote, the rebellion rather died down. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni said a person could not serve two masters and, since I believe this matter is political and since the hon. member for Comox-Alberni talked politics himself for ten or fifteen minutes, I do not see why I should not be able to relate politics to this subject. It was suggested here that the government, that is to say the nation, might subsidize the freight haul across northern Ontario. In that connection I wish to refer to a statement made by the hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Tucker)—or is he still the hon. member for Rosthern?—who is making speeches up and down Saskatchewan. The