

taxation that is capable of being remedied by a very minor amendment to the act. I bring that to the attention of the government and point out that while the Speech from the Throne says that the most rigid economy, and so on, does not solve the problem, the adjustment of these inequities in connection with the administration of the act will aid in the alleviation, of the burden of taxation upon the Canadian people. I shall refer to taxation in a general way a little later.

Let me now turn briefly to transportation. I do not intend to deal at great length with this matter, because we are severely handicapped in that regard. The ministry have the advantage of knowing what they purpose doing in respect to a certain reference made in the Speech from the Throne; we have not that advantage. So far as I am concerned I propose to suspend all criticism, friendly or unfriendly, of the government's proposal until I see the proposal in all its details. But there are certain observations I am justified in making in connection with the government's position on transportation. As regards freight rates, I shall not go into those at great length because the land freight rates question has been very thoroughly threshed out in this House and out of it. But I wish to say to my hon. friends to my left that whatever the Supreme Court of Canada may see fit to do with the Crownsnest pass agreement, whether they restore it or do not restore it, the transportation question so far as freight rates are concerned will not be solved. If they restore the Crownsnest rates on the prairies it simply means continued chaos and confusion in the matter of the freight rates of this country. So far as my province is concerned it means an increase of the gross discrimination which already exists. As to some of the prairie sections and some sections in the east it simply means further discrimination against particular parts of the country. If Canada is to expand and develop there must be found in connection with transportation, as in other lines of public activity, some harmony, some equity.

It will not do for the government simply to say that as the matter is before the courts nothing can be done in regard to the freight rates question. The Prime Minister indicated in his western speeches that he was very much alive to the need of a solution of this question. While he did not say so in express terms or in language that would justify the claim that it should later be given expression to in legislation, yet his remarks on the subject to the people all through the west implied that this government was deeply concerned with

[Mr. Stevens.]

the freight rates problem, was seeking a solution of it, and would offer to parliament a solution at the coming session. I want to say to him in all courtesy that the fact that the Supreme court is studying this technical and legal point does not in the slightest degree absolve him and his government from responsibility in the matter.

In regard to ocean rates I have already stated that I am necessarily precluded from offering any criticism or any approval of the government's proposal. I will say that any proposal which will bring about the carrying of the produce of this country to its ultimate market at lower cost than at present will undoubtedly be welcomed by Canada. But when I heard the Prime Minister last night in the closing remarks of his speech—the last fifteen minutes—preface his discussion of this problem with the word "combine", I knew at once that he was simply seeking first to create in the public mind the impression that a combine existed, and then to make the subtle suggestion to the people that he was about to dissolve or dispose of this combine in some way. So far as the north Atlantic freight rates are concerned there is just one point I might suggest to the Prime Minister. It is not a question of combine; it is a question of whether the freights of this country are being carried at a fair cost and a fair rate to those who carry them. I want to remind the Prime Minister that for three years he has had under his control a splendid fleet of ships.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

Mr. STEVENS: My hon. friends laugh, and what they are laughing at is this, that during the war the cost of producing shipping was higher than it is to-day. That applies to every private shipowner in the world; many of the companies have gone into liquidation and bankruptcy because of that fact. So that will not excuse them for neglecting an opportunity of dealing with this problem. I say they have had under their control a splendid fleet of ships, some of them operating on the Pacific, others operating in different parts of the world. Why is it necessary—I ask this question in reference to this proposal, whatever it may be, and of which we can learn only through the newspapers—to ask the taxpayers of Canada to subsidize a privately owned line when you have ships, a large number of ships and better ships than they have, already in your possession and operating allegedly at a loss? Here we have ten or fifteen ships, or thereabouts, operating in this Atlantic combine to-day. The government have for three years sanctioned, blessed, approved and supported the