

*Privy Council Appeals*

ask any hon. member of this house: What can a province do when it realizes that it is placed in a position which is rendering its economic development and well-being an absolute impossibility? It has not the constitutional competence to deal with the problem. The government which has that competence will not listen. What is the province to do? If it has no appeal to the privy council or any other means by which it can take its case to the foot of the throne, will someone tell me what the province can do? I submit that as a result of this situation there are three of the majestic provinces of this dominion which are under the gravest handicaps. Now then, absolute power is in the hands of this parliament with respect to matters of this sort, the freight rate structure for example. I shall not go into more detail; I shall deal with it later on, because it is an abuse crying to high heaven for restitution and redress. It has existed in the west to such an extent that it has prevented us from developing our industry. We have known we were being hurt; but we have not known how until now, when we are just beginning to examine into the situation and are finding out. There has been someone in this dominion whose business it was to know whether we were being hurt, and that person has not attended to his business; now we have found this out, what recourse have we? I am not complaining unduly, but I am putting the matter honestly and in a straightforward way before the members of this house.

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. member knows that the whole freight rate structure was considered by the board of railway commissioners. The whole question was considered and representatives of the western provinces were heard. That court was set up by this parliament for the purpose of dealing with the very problems to which he refers.

Mr. BLACKMORE: The all important matter is—the results. The results have ruined us as far as many aspects of the possible development of our industrial life are concerned. I do not wish to get into any detailed discussion of the point; I am illustrating it in passing. The time will come when I shall rise in my place in the house and air this problem in considerable detail, and at that time we shall go into the matter of the railway board and find out if possible—

Mr. CAHAN: This is your proper court of appeal, not the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Mr. BLACKMORE: In the last analysis, the representatives of the province of Alberta and the other three provinces stand before

[Mr. Blackmore.]

this court. They can make their plea, but it is the voting strength of the representatives of all the provinces in this parliament that decides. And who are the provinces in this dominion that can outvote all the other provinces put together? It comes down to that. I do not wish to raise any cause of difference or cause of bitterness. All I want to say is this: You simply must make it possible for a people to live.

Mr. BENNETT: But it was to remove the matter from the realm of contention that the court was established and that it was provided that evidence might be heard and judgments given on that evidence. I should like to say to my hon. friend—because I was familiar with the matter in those days—that the western provinces had representation before the board, and so had boards of trade. The evidence is there in the library and may be read, and the judgments are predicated upon that evidence. This parliament could not create a railway commission and then declare that it should not decide the question of rates. Is that the suggestion?

Mr. BLACKMORE: I am not prepared to go into details. The details as they have been discovered and revealed by several of the investigating bodies that are making submissions to the Rowell commission disclose conditions which are positively horrifying, and when the whole truth is known to members of the house they will stand appalled. That is one little point which I cite to show what the dominion has done with a situation over which it had unchallengeable and absolute control. Here is another point—the tariff structure of the dominion. There is no doubt in the world that this parliament has complete control over that; no province challenges its right at all. All that the provinces can do is to stand and take it. This matter has been brought to the attention of the house several times. I shall again bring it chiefly to the notice of hon. gentlemen as an example of what this parliament has done in a matter over which it has absolute control, the idea being to show what parliament might do, what a court might do in Canada if we had absolutely centralized control.

Mr. CAHAN: Is this discussion relevant to the second reading of the bill?

Mr. THORSON: Surely it is relevant if it is directed to the relative merits of centralization and decentralization of authority.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks more closely to the question before the house, which is the second reading of the bill.