

The Address—Mr. Benjamin

of production based on net farm income rather than gross farm income. If this principle is not found in proposed government stabilization legislation, that legislation will be treated accordingly by the members of this party, members of farm organizations and others in this country.

A great deal has been said in the last few weeks in the press and in this House by spokesmen for farm organizations, spokesmen for the government as well as by the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, in respect of the movement of grain. In this regard the minister, during the question period today and on other occasions, has blamed all the difficulties on the snow conditions. He will not admit it, but the Canadian railways were behind in grain movements before the first snowflake fell in Saskatchewan or anywhere else on the prairies last fall. They were behind then, and they are further behind now.

There is nothing new about this problem. It has occurred and recurred almost every year since the end of the second world war. Successive federal governments have refused to face up to the problem and deal with it in any effective way. We had a classic example forcefully brought to our attention last winter regarding this situation on the prairies, showing how incapable our railway transportation system is to meet the transportation needs of the country. They have never kept up with transportation requirements. To understand that this is the fact one need only look at the deteriorating condition of our railway tracks and consider the inadequate number of snowplows and locomotives to deal with snow conditions. Mile after mile of the lines of both railways in the three prairie provinces sat unused for six or seven weeks this past winter without a wheel being put to them.

To illustrate this point I would refer to what was said by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) yesterday. He said that 25 carloads of grain sat on one siding for almost 60 days. On a little siding in my own constituency, Adams, there were seven empty cars put in on January 29. Four of those cars were loaded on January 30 and three more were loaded on February 11. All seven cars are still sitting there. Four more cars were loaded yesterday by the elevator agent. He could not finish loading all the cars because the track was blocked with snow. I suggest there are thousands of carloads of grain on the tracks at various points which have been sitting there for weeks because the railways are incapable of moving them. Thousands of cars have been waiting to be loaded but the agents could not load them because they could not be spotted.

Both railway companies have decreased their maintenance-of-way forces, with the result that back tracks and switches have remained unshovelled and uncleaned for weeks on end. Snow fences are not only unrepaired; some have been taken down and never replaced. The CPR complained about having 19,000 miles of snow to plow in the prairie region this year as compared with only 1,000 last year. I would ask where their snow fences are and what has happened to their maintenance of way crews. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) complains that the railways thumb their noses at him and will not honour his requests. If the Minister of Transport has not learned by now that he must make the companies do these things, I suggest we need a new Minister of Transport.

[Mr. Benjamin.]

Another item which is in the throne speech concerns steps to be taken to end any discrimination in freight rates. We must see that suggestion implemented. I never thought I would live to see the day when discrimination in freight rates came to an end, but it is in the throne speech and we are now waiting to get the legislation. We are anxious to see it, because we want to know what the Liberals mean by "any discrimination in freight rates". That statement which appears in the throne speech is pretty all-inclusive. If the government is really going to act on this, it will be a great day for western Canada and I am sure this will be of help to the people in the Atlantic provinces, in northern Ontario and in eastern Quebec. When that is done, it will be a magnificent day. I think I can even stomach the Liberals a few weeks longer just to see that legislation.

An hon. Member: But how much longer?

Mr. Benjamin: Let me mention one or two other freight rate items in order to be helpful to the Minister of Agriculture. He might want to use my suggestions when he is finalizing the drafting of legislation, or to strengthen his proposals to the cabinet in order to make sure the legislation does in fact do away with discrimination in freight rates. It now costs 19 cents a hundredweight to ship live cattle from Edmonton to Vancouver. If you butcher the cattle in Edmonton and ship it to Vancouver as dressed beef, it costs \$1.39 a hundredweight. It costs \$2.90 a hundredweight to ship livestock from Prince Albert to Toronto; but if you butcher the cattle in Prince Albert and ship it as dressed beef to Toronto, it costs \$3.40. What is even worse, the cheapest way of sending a carload of steel from Hamilton to Calgary is to ship it from Hamilton to Vancouver and then back to Calgary. The rate from Hamilton to Vancouver is \$1.85 a hundred pounds, but from Hamilton to Calgary the rate is \$2.65 a hundred pounds; yet Calgary is 700 miles closer to Hamilton than is Vancouver. If the Liberal government's legislation cures these problems it will be a great day for people in many parts of Canada.

I should now like to turn to another matter having to do with freight rates. The minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board reopened this matter when he said in a speech he made in Winnipeg last August that possibly it is time to review and adjust the Crowsnest pass rate agreement. Whenever anyone makes that suggestion, whether it is the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt or an official of the CNR or the CPR, it only means one thing: the only way they will review and adjust the Crowsnest pass rates is upward. We have heard similar statements by the Alberta livestock association and the Palliser wheat growers. That would be selling out the grain growers of western Canada if we adjust the Crowsnest pass rates. The minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board and officials of the railway companies have said a good deal about the low Crowsnest pass rates, but none of these people has mentioned what the CPR received as part of the deal when the agreement was made.

Let me tell you a little bit about what the CPR received. They received \$11,000 per mile, for a total of \$3,630,000, to construct the rail line from Lethbridge, Alberta, to Nelson, British Columbia, through the Crowsnest pass and the Kettle valley. That represented about 35 per cent of the