

Supply—Transport

Mr. Green: What company is building these ships?

Mr. Chevrier: They are being purchased from Marine Industries Limited and will be converted as weather ships.

Item agreed to.

Railway service—Hudson Bay railway—

621. Construction and improvements—capital—further amount required, \$8,300.

Mr. Knight: I have the greatest respect for at least one reason which motivates the Minister of Finance in trying to get these estimates through the committee, but this item represents such an important matter to northern Saskatchewan that I cannot let it pass without a word. We consider the development of the Hudson Bay railway as being vital to northern Saskatchewan. Reference was made last night, particularly by the hon. member for Souris, to the grain elevator at Saskatoon and the fact that it is not put to proper use.

It is our hope that in the days to come when the present wheat agreements will have run out there will be more occasion to store grain in northern Saskatchewan, particularly in Saskatoon. Our hope is that the elevator there will be used to a greater extent than it has been used during the past few years. With the wheat contracts there was a need for speedy delivery but that condition will be changed from now on and it is to be hoped that this grain elevator will be used for the purpose for which it was built.

I could make a speech on the notes I have here, but I shall reverse the method and instead of making a speech I shall simply use the notes. I have put down one or two things which I think are important and I shall state them in the shortest possible time. All things being equal, there is no doubt that it would be advantageous for the importers in the province to use that route. With a lengthening of the insurance period and a consequent lengthening of the navigation season the farmers could save money by shipping their wheat over this railroad, I believe to the extent of eleven or twelve cents per bushel. Because of the contracts with Great Britain our farmers have not been able to take advantage during the past few years of the saving that was possible.

A bill has been introduced by my colleague, the hon. member for Melville, to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act to place Churchill on the same footing as Vancouver, Port Arthur and Fort William as shipping points for wheat. Such an amendment would be of great help. The principal association promot-

[Mr. Chevrier.]

ing the use of this port, the Hudson bay route association, are sending a delegation to Ottawa to ask for a greater use of this route. I plead with the government to give favourable consideration to their representations.

Because of the limited time in which insurance is applicable, only a partial use has been made of the time during which the port facilities could have been used. Insurance is applicable for 65 days from August 8 to October 10, and during that period the port facilities for the shipment of wheat were used for only 18 days last season. I am thankful that five and a half million bushels of wheat were shipped last year which was some small advance over the year before, but, as the Minister of Transport knows, that is only a token shipment from that port. With the full use of the facilities there is no reason why 20,000,000 bushels of wheat could not be shipped out during that time. If the period during which insurance is applicable were lengthened the amount that could be handled would be correspondingly greater.

We will be having certain gentlemen in eastern Canada, and perhaps in this house, saying that this railroad is a white elephant, that it is costing the taxpayers money, but I want to say to them that it has been demonstrated that if 15 million bushels were shipped through the port in one year it would eliminate that contention. If I am to keep my promise I shall have to stop, but there are three or four points I should like to stress.

First, we need the co-operation of the interested parties, the wheat board, the railways, the harbours board, the provincial governments and above all the federal government in order to encourage the use of this route.

Second, we should have the greatest possible quantity of imports and exports moved over this route.

Third, there should be a lengthening of the insurance period at both ends of the present period. It is rather ridiculous that a ship should be in that port a day or two before the insurance period commences and remain there for a couple of days in quiet waters waiting for that period to commence. As I have said on other occasions, this period should not be inflexible. After all, the weather varies from year to year and with the navigation services we have in those northern seas I do not see why the insurable season could not be made flexible. Captains of ships operating this route have brought that to my attention.

Lastly, I see no reason, from the surveys and reports we have received, why the insurance