

Transportation

pleased they are buying Alberta wheat in order to feed their chickens.

The point I was making was an entirely different one. Let me put it on the proper basis so that the hon. member's chicken farmers will not feel offended. I was saying that under this bill a study is being made of Crowsnest pass rates to British Columbia for the purpose of comparing those rates with other freight rates, so that interested people can point a finger at the level of the Crowsnest rates. My remarks centred on the fact that this device is a springboard for a study to be made, in the course of which it will be shown that the Crowsnest pass rates are extremely low. It will also be pointed out, through publicity, that somebody is subsidizing the farmers in my riding and elsewhere who ship their grain at the Crowsnest rates. This is what we do not want to happen. This is why we do not want a study made. This is what we say may take place following such a study. I was cautioning the minister against having such a study made. If only a comparison of rates is involved, what would be the need for an elaborate study? The rate under the Crowsnest pass agreement is in the neighbourhood of 22 cents, and anyone can get on the telephone and find out what the rates are on grain to feed those chickens about which the hon. member for Kootenay West is talking.

The matter goes much deeper than that. Hon. members opposite intend to use this study as a device for bringing back the baby which was thrown out with the bathwater, when their amendment on this subject was defeated. The minister has told us that no costs will be shown. I hope he adheres to that undertaking, because if he does not I will be the first to call his attention to the fact that he has dragged in all these other matters which we feel should not have been brought in.

It was with these things in mind that I felt it necessary to rise the other day and make the observations I did. I still feel I was justified in doing so. I do not want to offend the hon. member for Kootenay West, because he is a good friend of mine, but I just wanted to set the record straight.

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): I want to say in as few words as possible that it is still difficult to decide how to receive this legislation and, in the end, how to vote in regard to it. There are as many facets to this bill as there are clauses; in fact, there are more. I

want to say to the minister and his supporters that some of the features of this legislation are commendable and can be accepted and praised; but there are others which, to put it mildly, are very difficult to accept. In fact I would say, as I have said on repeated occasions, that some of the assumptions upon which this legislation is based are ill-conceived. Clause 1, which sets the tone for the rest of the bill, is based on assumptions that in Canada today there exists sufficient transportation competition that we can rely on competition as a natural regulator or protector of the public interest, and protector of the users of transportation services. Insufficient evidence has been given to warrant that kind of assumption.

● (3:40 p.m.)

It may well be that in some parts of the country, where population density and industrial activity are high, there is sufficient competition in transport to warrant greater reliance on that factor than we have been able to place upon it in the past; but this is not the case with regard to vast areas and regions.

In speaking to this bill the minister has expressed an excessive degree of solicitude for the railways, especially in view of the fact that their revenue and earnings position is improving, and is likely to improve in the foreseeable future. As the population of our country grows and productivity increases, the railways will be in a much better revenue and earnings position. Therefore it is unnecessary to express the kind of solicitude for them that we have done in this legislation, which gives them ample opportunity to apply to the public treasury for support, when they perform a particular service as a matter of public policy and do not earn enough money performing it to satisfy them.

The minister is to be commended for agreeing to amendments to several clauses, amendments which have improved the bill. The legislation contains certain features that are an improvement over existing statutes which deal with transportation, but there are still objectionable features in it. This underlines the problem which many hon. members face in deciding how to vote on a bill which contains many commendable clauses as well as some that are objectionable.

This bill's provisions with respect to maximum rate control were objectionable from the start. The minister refused to agree to some amendments that were offered and, as a