

Transportation

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, if the hon. gentleman will look again at the language he will see that it says:

—shall undertake a study of the differences between rates on grain moving for export to ports in British Columbia and rates on grain moving otherwise to such ports—

It does not say anything about costs. All the commission are supposed to look at is how much is charged, which we know, for export grain and how much is charged for domestic grain, and see whether something should be done to bring about some kind of adjustment between the two.

Mr. Kindt: You could get over the telephone what you are asking for in this section. If you turn the commission loose in this connection they will make a great study and come up with cost figures and a great many other things in order to substantiate what they find in the way of freight charges for moving grain through the Crowsnest pass, and for moving grain for domestic use. These figures are what we have been talking about for a week. I would not believe the commission with respect to any figures they put forward from a study of a whole bundle of statistics received from the railway companies. These figures would be absolutely null and void so far as the farmers of western Canada are concerned. They would have no confidence in them. If this study is to be confined 100 per cent to the rates, in the one case for shipping feed grains and in the other in respect of the Crowsnest pass rates, we know it is 23 cents or thereabouts under the Crowsnest pass rates.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I think we are all anxious to make progress this evening. Perhaps I could direct the hon. gentleman's attention to the second part of this section, which says:

—shall report to the governor in council for such action as he deems desirable or expedient in the public interest.

The hon. gentleman is perfectly right; everybody knows what the rate is on domestic grain and on export grain. But the farmers of British Columbia have said they want them to be the same.

• (8:20 p.m.)

This parliament took steps at this session to provide a subsidy on feed grain. However, even with the subsidy the rates are not exactly the same. This amendment provides for a study, at the request of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture and other farmers, of whether it

would be appropriate to meet the demands of these farmers. It has nothing to do with the costs of the railways. I do not believe the railways would even need to be asked a question about this. Anything the railways could tell us is already known. What we want the commission to advise upon is the question of public policy, whether there should be a different rate established for domestic grain or whether we should continue to use the feed grain subsidy. It is just that very limited question, as was put admirably by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra and the hon. member for Kootenay West. There could not possibly be any effect on the people shipping grain to British Columbia, but might be some effect on the farmers of British Columbia.

Mr. Herridge: I just want to tell the hon. member for Macleod that he is under a complete misapprehension. This suggestion was made before the committee by the representatives of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture, in an effort to provide grain to feeders in British Columbia, dairymen and poultrymen, at a price similar to the export rate. Grain costs a considerable amount in the interior of British Columbia. The request was decided upon after consultation with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and other agricultural groups, who made no objection to this suggestion. It is not doing anything to the Crowsnest pass rates or other rates. The request is that the relatively small quantity of grain that is used by grain consumers in British Columbia, in relation to grain consumers in British Columbia, in relation to grain exported, be carried at the export rate instead of at the rates presently charged. The commission is requested to study the matter and report.

Mr. Kindt: I am quite familiar with the facts which the hon. member for Kootenay West has given. I am aware also of the representations of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture. Let me say that federation, in turn, represents some small fruit farmers and the others in British Columbia. I represent 6,000 wheat farmers and I am protecting the interests of the wheat farmers of Alberta. I do not want anything used as an excuse for studying these rates. We have heard the minister's suggestion that a study be made which would expose certain rates, make them the subject of newspaper comment and a hundred and one other things. We have not any fear from that. What we do not want is to have this matter presented in the press and elsewhere as though someone is paying a subsidy to the grain farmer of Alberta.