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the spouts in order to be able to load the cars. It is not surprising that the elevator companies waited to do this, but they are doing it readily because they want to use those hopper cars. They are eager to use them. They compete with one another for the use of these cars.

It is now possible for us to say to the railways, "We have the hopper cars in position so now improve some important lines to carry them." To give an example, Mr. Chairman, consider the line between Rosetown and Kindersley, a line which in my opinion should be brought up to a standard that can carry hopper cars. These cars can be run on that line on the western end and on the eastern end, but there is a link-piece between on which they cannot be run. Clearly, the challenge there is to bring that line up to standard.

I have said previously, and I repeat now, that the government has tried to take this issue about the kind of rail and grain handling system that we really require out of the narrow range of both petty party politics and the interests of the railways and elevator companies, and out of the hands of other individual groups. We have tried to reveal the facts and to make those facts available to provincial governments, the railways, elevator companies, and particularly to grain producers, so they can face up to the fact that with certain changes they may be able to have their grain handled at far lower rates and thus get the benefit of changes in the system.

I hope hon. members will not misunderstand my objective. My objective is to see that any benefits which come from changes in the system do not get lost in the system, as happened so often in the past when individual elevators were closed and individual branch lines were abandoned. The producers living in those areas lost by those actions. My objective is to have the benefits passed on to the producers. Indeed, I have indicated that the provision of some compensation in the period of adjustment would be a good thing. I have not heard that suggestion taken up eagerly by hon. members opposite or by groups and various organizations on the prairies, perhaps because some of them are concerned that they would lose something if that particular matter were proceeded with. I submit that it deserves further examination. Of course, it is not a matter on which one can move rapidly without co-ordination.

Here are the words of Ira Mumford, general manager of the Saskatchewan wheat pool, as reported in the *Star-Phoenix* of January 31 last. Under the heading "System Wearing Out" he is reported as saying that the country elevator system is wearing out and that over the next few years more and more elevators will no longer be useful; the logical step would be central locations for replacements. This is his view, a view supported by the progress in this direction made by elevator companies over the last ten years, even though unco-ordinated with the railways.

Hon. members will have to determine for themselves whether they want moneys paid to the railway companies under the existing transportation act to keep a branch line in place when it moves only relatively few bushels of grain, or if they would prefer that money being put to better use to serve the producers. These are the real challenges with which we are faced.

[Mr. Lang.]

Some hon. members say, "Oh, woe betide us. Our rail system is handling American grain. Oh, what a tragedy. Only last year, in February, we could not move all the grain that we wanted to move to Vancouver. How illogical it is that some American grain is moving to Seattle on Canadian lines." I suggest that they are confusing two problems. We are moving American grain on our lines this winter, when the supply of boxcars is more plentiful than in the peak period of summer. I ask why not, when this does not interfere with the orderly movement of grain in Canada? Why shouldn't the railways move this grain to Seattle if they can make a profit on it? There must be a very strange feeling of some hon. members about the railways if their argument is that the railways should not make a profit on this movement, that there is something sacred about Canadian lines and that they should be used only for the movement of Canadian grain. That does not make sense to me.

What I have said to hon. members, and what I tell farmers, is that we will do everything we have to do to make sure that our transportation equipment is not used to handle American grain when it is needed for handling Canadian grain. But when there are 17 million or 18 million bushels of grain already in Vancouver, when grain experts, the Wheat Board, the elevators and everybody else agree that that amount is actually higher than is ideal, why should we load additional cars with grain and just hold them in readiness to move out there? That does not make sense. This is not the proper way to operate the system. We do not make progress that way.

I hope hon. members will recognize that this purchase of hopper cars was an extremely important demonstration by the government of Canada of a willingness to pledge the resources of the people of Canada to make sure that grain, which is of such importance to the prairie region and indeed to all of Canada, does in fact move to market. It is extremely strange and really rather difficult for me to sit here and listen to Members of Parliament from the prairie region attacking this purchase, suggesting to some of my colleagues from other parts of the country that that money ought not to have been spent by the treasury. I suggest to them that that is not a very useful thing from the point of view of the prairie farmers, particularly when such a step is taken and such expenditures are made by the people of Canada for the good of the people of Canada and, more particularly and directly, for the good of the prairie region and of the farmers there. That step will be even more important in the days ahead. We may need more such action, and it should not be attacked by hon. members from the prairie region. Hon. members representing or purporting to represent farm constituencies in that region, under the guise of defending their local communities are attacking those helpful steps which have been taken and I hope will continue to be taken to help the prairie farmers.

Mr. Drury: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Chairman. It is now almost four o'clock and I think there would be agreement to continue with this debate and hope that we could make progress, rather than proceeding with private members' hour.