

Grain

but I think the figures I will mention are accurate.

The year before the Conservative government took office in 1957, 16 million bushels were shipped through Churchill. From then until 1962 grain shipments increased each year through Churchill until about 24 million bushels were shipped. My constituents feel that Churchill is capable of handling more wheat than the port is handling at present. The Liberal government on taking office assured us that record shipments would be made through Churchill. If one looks at the figures one will find that in only one year since 1962 have more than 24 million bushels been shipped through our port. I think 25.5 million bushels were shipped one year. In other years shipments were drastically reduced. During the past season I think about 22.5 million bushels were shipped through Churchill, a drastic reduction, particularly after the government had assured us we would be handling record shipments.

Mr. Pepin: I bet you a dollar your figures are wrong.

Mr. Simpson: I am sure anyone checking with officials of the National Harbours Board will learn that Churchill has the reputation of being the most efficient port in Canada in turning around ships and in loading and unloading them. Churchill on many occasions has been declared the most efficient port in Canada; yet grain shipments through that port are not being increased to the extent they ought to be. Perhaps the minister may produce figures showing that Churchill had a record year this past year. The Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) lauded the government for the grain traffic handled by the port of Vancouver. I wish he were here to tell us why grain shipments through Churchill have been decreasing each year. Is the government being influenced by some who are lobbying on behalf of other Canadian ports? A port of Montreal official, J. C. Bourguignon, secretary of the Montreal Port Council, made a statement in 1965 which has been repeated many times. He called government promises to increase freight shipments through Churchill "electioneering", adding that he could hardly believe that could happen "without consultation between the federal government and eastern port managers". He went on to say:

The council has strongly opposed any move to increase the use of Churchill because it is an artificial enterprise opened due to the war. We don't mind the status quo, but we'll rise up against any government plan to increase its use.

[Mr. Simpson.]

• (1:30 a.m.)

Considering the need for us to modernize grain handling facilities across Canada and remembering what Montreal port officials are saying about Churchill, it seems that those Montreal officials as well as others are influencing the government to hold the line on shipments through Churchill. There are many reasons for saying this and bringing this matter to the attention of the house because, just to quote a few figures, storage charges at the Churchill elevator are six cents a bushel for nine months while storage charges at other terminals are nine cents for nine months. It costs 12 cents a bushel to take wheat from Saskatoon to Churchill, and 27 cents a bushel to take wheat from Saskatoon to Montreal, pointing up the fact that it is much cheaper to ship it out of Churchill than out of any other port in Canada from the Churchill designated area of grain shipment in western Canada.

I would also like to point out that on June 20, 1966, the day the first Russian wheat sale was announced, the price of No. 2 wheat at Montreal was \$2.205 a bushel, and the same day the price of No. 2 wheat at Churchill was \$2.13 a bushel, a difference of seven cents a bushel. This means that it is not only cheaper to ship wheat out of Churchill than it is out of these other ports but it is also cheaper for the purchaser to buy it. There is a saving for the purchaser and for the farmer. These are only some of the reasons why the port of Churchill should be considered in the improvement which hon. members think is so necessary for our grain handling facilities across Canada.

There is also talk about the shipping season at Churchill. It should be extended and there are various ways in which it could be extended. A report I have here says that in 1927 the McLean Commission spent a season on the Hudson Bay route and reported that there could be a shipping season of 120 days without the assistance of icebreakers. Today, 42 years later, we have only 88 days. So the extension of the shipping season at Churchill to not less than 120 days is a definite requirement if we are going to improve our grain handling facilities in western Canada.

Along with that there should be marine rates of insurance available for the port of Churchill comparable with those available at other ports. To this end immediate consideration should be given to the use of the new Alexbow-Hammerhead and Gibson icebreaker systems. Members of the government should