

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

by the two railroads would be such as to correct the situation. I had the assurance of the minister that it was not shortage of cars or shortage of motive power that was the limiting factor at the moment but, rather, the unusual and severe snowslide conditions in the Rocky Mountains which had prevented these rail facilities from carrying adequate amounts of grain to Vancouver.

My concern is really about the answer the minister gave. I think we are faced with a basic shortage of facilities for moving and handling grain destined for the west coast from the prairie region, a situation that I do not think is a temporary one. I realize, as I am sure the minister does, that we have had much worse weather conditions than normal, such as snowslides and so on but I think we have to be prepared to cope with that sort of thing. If you are operating a farm you come to know that you should not schedule a certain level of operation and expect it to continue uninterrupted; that just does not happen. What you have to do instead is to build in a certain amount of power, equipment or labour reserve to handle what we call "down time", a term that is also used by the construction industry. We know we will hit this condition to a certain extent.

I would be more encouraged were the minister able to assure the House that the government had in hand programs to move the volume of traffic that will have to be handled if we are to stay in business. If we are to move the volume of grain that the minister has forecast we are going to sell in the coming year, these programs must be formulated now. I am satisfied we could have sold more grain than the minister has forecast had the Wheat Board been given assurances that it could move sufficient grain to fulfil any contract the board was willing to undertake.

• (2220)

The minister has admitted, as has the Wheat Board, that contracts have been turned down because they could not afford to be in the position of being unable to deliver on contracts which had been made. They now, I am sure, must be very close to this position on some contracts which have been made. The information I have is that last week there were 400 cars a day unloaded, when they should have been unloading 800 cars. This is a chronic condition. If the minister can give the House some assurance that this situation will be corrected or that there are long-term plans, I believe the House would be very glad to hear this. I know I would be glad to hear it.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has observed the tremendous movement of grain in the country and out of the prairie region. Indeed, this year with the unprecedented sales level, even though we had a very good crop last year, we will probably be disposing of more grain than is grown in the prairie region. In the case of the port of Vancouver, for instance, notwithstanding all our difficulties and notwithstanding the fact that last year we had a record year in respect of exports from the west coast, as of March 1 our exports were running 25 per cent ahead of the figure for the previous year.

It is true that we have had snow difficulties in the Rockies, and I did tell the hon. member that during this period of time it is, in my view, not a shortage of cars or locomotives that is causing our problems but weather conditions. The railways have enough equipment to reach the 800-car target if weather conditions would permit. We are selling at record levels. We will continue to do so. We will continue to set ourselves new and difficult challenges in the selling of grain and in putting stresses and strains on the available equipment. I do not say we have enough equipment at the present time to meet next year's challenge, and we are looking very closely at the additional equipment needed for that purpose. We have been studying the grain handling system, so that we know a good deal about which way to go in making improvements.

With things like the block system and the co-ordinators working at both terminals, as well as the car pooling which goes on, we are getting much more out of the system than otherwise would be the case. As to the question of whether we have to go to a six or seven-day week in the elevators and in the terminals, we could get more out of the system in this way but I think we will need more rail equipment for the movement I see ahead, because we will go after new sales in very significant quantities year after year and we must go on building the system to accomplish that end.

We will need the co-operation of all parts of the system, the farmers, the handling system and the railways, in order to achieve these sales records, but I am confident that we can do so. We will take the necessary steps. When the difficulties of snow and weather began in Vancouver we had in store at that port about the right amount of grain. It was not as though those terminals were empty; they were relatively full to their working capacity. I believe this is something we should remember.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.