

*Transportation*

coming into force of this section. Under such a provision it is conceivable the review could be held within a very short period of time. With all the changes that are predicted and predictable under this revolutionary legislation, I submit this is an impractical framework of time within which the commission is to operate. As I say, there may possibly be some sympathy for a review within ten years, but certainly there is little sympathy in this party or amongst the members of the standing committee on transportation for a review to be undertaken within the period of time specified in the proposed section 329.

We, in the west, do not want the Crowsnest rates tampered with at all. This point has been made eloquently by other members of this assembly, but I emphasize and underline the position they took. I feel this is no waste of time for this committee or for the country at large because it is a position that cannot be stressed too strongly. The Crowsnest pass rates, Mr. Chairman, are pillars of industry and enterprise in western Canada and are as important to western Canada as is the question of port parity, for example, to the maritimes. The Crowsnest pass rates, and the whole arrangement surrounding them, were won by dint of great effort, not only spiritually but mentally, by the people of western Canada.

● (8:10 p.m.)

We do not want them tampered with. It is our concern for this pillar of our economy, in a mysterious type of future only half-revealed by this proposed legislation, which leads many of us, and leads me, to fight this defensive battle with respect to these rates. We do not want to buy a pig in a poke, Mr. Chairman. We know what we have with the Crowsnest agreement. It is a statutory matter. It is set down in perpetuity, or as far as the foreseeable future may be envisioned. We do not want to risk the stability and security of that institution, so vital to the welfare of the basic industry in western Canada; the industry that is in fact vital to the economy and welfare of this nation as a whole.

At some time we may favour a review, but we do not want that written into the legislation. We do not want to commit ourselves in black and white, in the printed word, to a review to be held within three years, as the legislation proposes. We do not want to say, either, in black and white, that we should never be interested in having such a review, or that we could never be persuaded that a review might be practical and necessary. A

review of the agreement might well be necessary in short order. But we should prefer to have such an undertaking available to us in an informal way. We should prefer the legislation to be drafted in such a way that no specific reference, for or against the proposed review, is incorporated in it.

Subsections 1 and 2 of section 329 in my opinion threaten the security of the western agricultural industry. They do that, whether the minister admits it or not. Those subclauses threaten the security and the status of our western farm industry, because they provide for a review that in the final analysis will serve only to encourage and incite public opinion against the western farmer.

The freight rate battle has been fought and won, and is incorporated in a statutory way as a policy affecting our national industry and political life. To reopen the issue, to fight it again, to present an opportunity for all the conflicting arguments, vested interests, power groups and all attendant parties to argue their cases again, to introduce again their prejudices and particular attitudes, is, in my estimation an invitation to virtual destruction. At the least, it is an invitation to embarrass the western farmer and the western agricultural industry.

I appeal to the minister to consider complete elimination of section 329 from the proposed legislation. He has listened patiently and responsibly to many representations on this subject during the past few days. Counting his time with the standing committee, he has listened to representations with patience, interest and scholarly mien for four or five months. He has accepted recommendations and amendments in substantial numbers. He has accepted improvements to his legislation. I appeal to him not to spoil his record. I suggest that the ultimate outcome, the ultimate result of the section as it is incorporated in the proposed legislation—the ultimate resolution of the problem, if you like—would be the creation of a situation where the stigma of subsidy would again be imposed on the western farmer. This would do a great disservice to the farmer and to the west in general.

I appeal to the minister who, with admirable and exemplary attention to detail and the feelings of all hon. members of the house, has devoted himself to piloting this bill this far, to let this legislation be his monument, and to consider the request from this side of the house that section 329 be removed. By so doing he would incorporate into the bill a