

Transportation

million bushels of wheat, then the alternative is that they should make some contribution to the treasury in compensation for any assistance they might get, due to a decision by the commission.

I am seeking reassurance that the Crowsnest pass rates will be sustained, but inevitably the whittling away at the Crowsnest pass rates will continue despite the reassurance of the minister. The statute says that, if there is an economic loss to the railways, that loss will be made up by grants from the government, and this means by taxation. When that happens people say, "Why should we be taxed in order to support a business that should be paying for itself?" The controversy will tend to continue, and this new section 329 rather suggests that there is some merit in the case which the railways have put up in the past, to the effect that the Crowsnest pass grain rates were uneconomic. I would urge the minister to consider changing the review period from three years to something like ten years.

● (6:40 p.m.)

Mr. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Chairman, I have been quite co-operative. I am sure the minister would be the first to agree that, while I wished to say something more on rail line abandonments, I stated I would wait until we reached this particular clause. I do not wish unnecessarily to hold up the bill. I know the minister has been very co-operative with the committee. Therefore, by containing myself until we reached this particular clause I thought we might be able to make some progress.

I listened very closely to what the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre had to say in respect of the Crowsnest pass grain trade, because I realize that when he was a minister of the crown for a number of years he was responsible for this movement and no doubt studied it very carefully. I think what he said about the ten-years provision is very pertinent. The grain trade does fluctuate, and the very fact that a rate has been in effect since 1898 and still is in effect should make it clear to anyone who is interested that it is a proper rate, and we should have the assurance from the minister of the crown that it will remain in effect for years to come.

This section gives me cause for fear, and that is really what prompted me to rise at this time to speak on this particular clause. Without too much ado, I should like to say that I wish the minister would reconsider this three-year period and even withdraw this complete

clause. In the time permitted to me I should like to explain to the house my views in this regard. I would say to the minister, first of all, that many people believe this particular clause in the bill is the thin edge of the wedge. Time and time again it has been stated to western Canada that the Crowsnest pass rates are the Magna Carta of the west. This is an accepted view. But if many people in western Canada see what I see in this bill, they will readily conclude that this bill, and this clause in particular, is the thin edge of the wedge with regard to the eventual destruction or removal of the Crowsnest pass rates.

The minister has assured the house that so long as he is minister the Crowsnest pass rates will be in complete effect; but this is not good enough. I do not think the minister will live forever. Also, in the evolution of cabinet ministers one must accept the fact that eventually the parliamentary secretary to the minister aspires to the position of the minister. Then, as has been suggested before in this debate, the minister may aspire to go to the other place. I do not know; but I do know that so long as the minister is in the house we can feel assured that the Crowsnest pass rates will remain. But looking over his shoulder I see the parliamentary secretary. I know his aspirations and I know his views. I know, from a study of the minutes of proceedings and evidence of the committee on transport and communications, that he has said in effect that the Crowsnest pass rates are outdated and are causing the railways to lose money. I do not wish to delay the house by quoting the parliamentary secretary; one has only to read proceedings No. 24 and 27 of the committee reports.

At the time when the officials of the C.P.R. appeared before this committee the hon. member for Kootenay East, who is parliamentary secretary to the minister, said in effect that the Crowsnest pass rates are outdated and that the railways are losing money on them. He said it is high time that the western farmers paid their fair share in moving their product to market. This in effect is what he said. So I hope hon. members will forgive me if I do not place too great an assurance on what the minister said when he stated that, so long as he is minister, these rates will remain in effect. Who knows how long he will be minister, especially when it has been suggested that he aspires to go to the other place?

Mr. Pickersgill: One has to do more than aspire in order to get there.