

know what the problems are. But no, a second invitation to Senator Argue and the Canadian Wheat Board met with refusal. They would not come to hear about the problems. I do not think that attitude is what the farmers want from the Canadian Wheat Board. In the beginning, the Canadian Wheat Board was created by the western farmers in order to solve problems, to move their grain and to give them the best possible price. As the hon. member noted, the Canadian Wheat Board still has tremendous support from Mr. Justice Hall whose opinion I value. He said that there is almost universal support for the Canadian Wheat Board. In the minds of many farmers, however, the Canadian Wheat Board is becoming too big. If it becomes a monopoly created by farmers, it is just as bad as a monopoly which is not created by farmers. I think there must be some change of thinking on the part of the Canadian Wheat Board very soon. It should realize that it should be securing and reflecting the thinking of the greatest possible number of farmers. It has a tremendous job to do. In my opinion, the closer the board is to farmers and the grass roots, the better job it will do.

● (1620)

The meeting was held, and some of the difficulties were resolved. The CPR gave some suggestions which were accepted by the farmers. With respect to the Cranbrook situation there were two very cold wintry weeks spent in the mountains in December. During the two weeks of the setting of the date and the meeting, a tremendous amount of grain was moved from the elevators at Lomond. The farmers started to get a little cash in their pockets. In my view, that co-ordination could have been done without the necessity of calling a meeting, but I was thankful it was done and is still going on.

There are other difficulties, including the rebuilding of the road from Milo to Lomond, which is an important factor, so that full loads can be hauled with hopper cars. This will be important.

In view of all the money which will be spent to rehabilitate, I urge that the line to which I have referred be considered along with the other two lines for which allotments have been made for 1981.

The grain which can be hauled from various places must be co-ordinated. There are elevators, different types of grain and different grades, and in my view a co-ordinator has a very important job.

Another reason I support this bill is that it mentions Churchill and Prince Rupert. I have not been to Churchill, but according to the information I have secured from farmers and through reading, there are times when Churchill could carry a much larger volume of grain. We should be using Churchill to a much greater degree than we are, particularly those who are within reasonable distances. I refer to Saskatchewan, perhaps Manitoba and some parts of Alberta. But where that access is closer, we should not be routing grain to Thunder Bay or Vancouver if it can go to Churchill and get into the markets of the world.

Grain Transportation

The Canadian Transport Commission has an important role to play in the movement of grain. It has been letting farmers down to a considerable degree by not taking a very active and alert interest in the movement of grain all the time, and not just when matters are at issue. There is also a role for the co-ordinator to play. The legislation under which the CTC works is important. I think the important change this bill would make would be to give the CTC a little more authority. If this authority were to hamper in any way the work of the co-ordinator, that could be discussed in committee and worked out.

By having members of this House from all sides who are knowledgeable in grain matters discuss them and work out a program, we might be able to do something really splendid for the movement of western grain. That is the object the hon. member had in submitting this bill.

If we could move more bushels of grain and get more cash flow into the pockets of farmers and producers, the better this country would become. There is a saying in the west that when farmers are poor, everybody is poor; when farmers are having hard times, everyone in the community is having a hard time. A farmer spends his money when he has it. He buys clothes for his wife and children; he buys cars; he buys trucks. He spreads his money around, and it circulates. When he does not have money, many businesses feel that depression as well.

I urge hon. members on the government side of the House to support this bill and send it to committee. There is nothing to be lost, and there is a tremendous amount to be gained by finding new and better ways to move grain in western Canada.

Mr. Maurice Bossy (Kent): Mr. Speaker, I may not be a western farmer, but I have been in the farm business all my life. I believe I understand the needs of the western farmer and the many representations which have been made concerning transportation of grain in the west.

One of the great qualities possessed by the hon. member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) is persistence. He never gives up, I understand, and with incredible determination he continues to find new and strange ways to gain greater control over the operations of the railways.

Bill C-266 is a perfect example of this persistence. Curiously enough, it turns out to be an amendment to Section 266 of the Railway Act. Section 266, as it now stands, gives the Canadian Transport Commission the power to direct the railways to move grain east after the seaway is closed and before the next harvest. This is quite a specific power.

As I see it, Bill C-266 would do two things. It would transfer that power to the Canadian Wheat Board, it would extend the scope of the section to cover grain movement throughout the year, and include movements to Vancouver, Prince Rupert and the port of Churchill. In essence, the section would apply to all western grain movement.

There are some other less significant changes proposed in this bill. For example, the hon. member wants the Canadian Wheat Board to be able to tell the railways to supply "the necessary cars and engines" as well as "furnish all facilities