

*Canadian National Railways and Air Canada*

these years such as the ones mentioned by the hon. member for Crowfoot.

Every year, chronically, there has been insufficient rolling-stock to move potatoes from P.E.I. and New Brunswick, insufficient stock cars to move stock out of western to eastern Canada, and insufficient cars to move lumber out of B.C. to anywhere in Canada or to meet our export commitments to the United States. They can build fancy specialty cars for esoteric commodities such as compartmentalized refrigerator cars to move dressed beef, dressed pheasants, or whatever else; they can make fancy equipment of that nature, but there is insufficient equipment to move most of our agricultural produce. This has been the case since 1947. This is also the case with regard to the moving of hogs and cattle.

The same is true with regard to the moving of people. We can spend billions of dollars in this country on divided highways and expensive real estate which makes real estate developers, land speculators and friends of my colleagues to my right very happy; we can spend money on that, and yet we can starve our rail and air transportation systems. I suppose the CNR wants to build a tower in order to get even with the CPR. They have one in Calgary, and I have not heard the hon. gentlemen complaining about the CPR building a tower in Calgary but not building enough boxcars. In fact, they used our money for it.

This is the other thing that my friends to the right do not choose to remember. Every dollar of that investment is paid for by the users of Canadian Pacific Railway's transportation system, and many of those investments are unnecessary and unneeded. They do nothing for the transportation requirements of this country. I say to the hon. gentlemen that until our rail and air transportation, as well as our pipelines and communications systems, are operated as a public utility and fully integrated, we will continue to have the problems which the hon. member for Crowfoot mentioned and even the odd one or two problems that the hon. member who led off this debate mentioned. That must be the intent and purpose of the debate on transportation of any kind in this House, whether or not the CNR made money or lost money. In that context, the debate is relevant, but it does not surprise me that we could get an irrelevant speech from the lead-off speaker in the opposition. I wish the hon. member for Crowfoot or the hon. member for Vegreville had started off the debate, because they know these things as well, or better, than I do.

I have also mentioned the movement of grain and bulk commodities in this country. You don't have to believe me, Mr. Speaker, but the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, which you could hardly call a small outfit, has spoken repeatedly about the inadequacies of our transportation system. On October 26 it noted that Mr. Esdale, an official of the Canadian Wheat Board who used to be in the Department of Transport under the minister's former colleague, the Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin, said that "supplies in the country elevators were more than adequate for this year's export markets, but there was a serious shortage of box cars because cars had been sitting around loaded with other goods. The difficulty with rail transport meant that the board was well below the export target set for that time of year".

[Mr. Benjamin.]

● (2120)

On November 2 the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool again said that shipments of grain, just from Saskatchewan, from August 1 to October 17 were down 68 million bushels compared with the same period last year. It said shipments were just able to keep pace with deliveries to the elevators, that stocks in the elevators had not gone down at all since September 15, and that there was still more than 50 per cent of the elevator system plugged. I hope that the Minister of Transport is paying attention to this, Mr. Speaker, because certainly the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board has not been paying attention.

On December 19 the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool said that transportation problems had probably blocked international grain sales totalling 75 million bushels this year, according to information given by Mr. Charley Gibbings, Canadian Wheat Board commissioner. Mr. Gibbings said he doubted that grain movement targets would be met this year unless more rail cars were channelled to the trade. He added that the board had deferred shipment of 15½ million bushels to foreign customers so that western feed grain could be hauled to Thunder Bay. Commenting on the shortage of rolling stock, he said that the only way the rail car crisis could be solved was to provide 4,000 hopper cars and to consign worn-out stock to the scrapyards.

Here I want to pay a compliment to the CNR. In the past few months they at least have been rehabilitating or rebuilding 900 cars and returning them to grain movement. We have yet to hear of anything the Canadian Pacific are doing, even though most of the grain shipping points are on Canadian Pacific lines. At least our publicly-owned corporation is making some kind of effort.

Listening to the hon. member for Mississauga and the hon. member for Crowfoot, I gather that they would make provision for the expenditure of a few more tens of millions of dollars in order that the Canadian National Railways' system could purchase rolling-stock and additional locomotive power. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that a little over a year ago the minister in charge of the Wheat Board announced the purchase of 2,000 hopper cars to be used for the movement of grain. Everybody applauded that announcement, I as well as everyone else, but not for the same reasons.

I applauded it because there was a need to get more cars into the movement of grain. But all we were really doing was bailing the railways out of a responsibility that was legitimately and legally theirs, the responsibility to supply sufficient rolling-stock, trackage and everything else required to meet the transportation needs of the country. We have still to find out how those cars are being financed, who is paying for their upkeep and who is collecting the freight.

It is not just good enough for us to buy some boxcars. Sooner or later parliament will have to move in, take over and operate on behalf of all Canadians all our rail and air transportation systems, including telecommunications, the hotels they own, their mineral rights, real estate developments and everything else that goes with them. Only then will we be able to provide the kind of transportation which Canadians need and should have.