

Transportation

transportation, and when we approach the revision of the Crow rate, we find it very difficult because it is so important to us historically.

Another issue I think the minister should consider carefully when he deals with this is the history of the Liberal Party in western Canada. In recent times it has not been a party in western Canada, and that is our problem. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Bockstael) spoke this afternoon. He is from St. Boniface. He is in no way a westerner, and that is not to take anything away from the parliamentary secretary. I have a high regard for him, but he is asked to speak and to take a position on something about which he knows nothing. He does not understand it. He does not feel it like westerners do. That is the kind of problem the minister faces in addressing this issue. The minister is dealing with issues which are much more important than simply the fiscal arrangements for some tracks and the moving of freight around the country.

There is one other point which needs to be made. I am not so sure it has been made yet in this debate on an opposition day. Incidentally, the Conservative Party chose to debate this issue. I will digress a minute here. It boggles my mind to know why the New Democratic Party, which wants to champion itself as the defender of the Crow rate, did not take the opportunity it had to put its own motion on this issue. I cannot understand why the New Democratic Party did not take its first opportunity. If I am not mistaken, the leader of the New Democratic Party moved a motion under Standing Order 26, the day after the announcement on Tuesday, February 9, to adjourn the House for an emergency debate on the Crow. Yet when the New Democratic Party was given the opportunity, it did not take it. This party took it. It is our responsibility to talk about the Crow rate because it is very important to us in western Canada, and it was this party which did so.

Mr. Althouse: We had our opportunity last week, and you took it away.

Mr. Mayer: The New Democratic Party did not take that opportunity to show how sincere it is about the Crow by debating the issue. We look forward to seeing what members of the New Democratic Party do with the remaining opposition days in this supply period.

Mr. Althouse: Do you think you will give us one some day?

Mr. Mazankowski: You had this one.

Mr. Mayer: The hon. member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) wants to know if we will give him a day. Actually, it is not in the power of the official opposition to determine when the NDP has an opposition day. As I understand the situation among House leaders, the NDP clearly had the opportunity to have this opposition day as its own but turned it down. I do not understand what kind of reasoning the hon. member for Humboldt-Lake Centre is using when he asks if we are prepared to give him a day, we being the official opposition.

Let me deal with what westerners think of the railroad companies. In many ways the railroads are mistrusted. CP is the largest Canadian company. According to "*The Financial Post 500*" CP is the largest company in Canada. It is larger than General Motors, larger than George Weston, larger than the Ford Motor Company of Canada and larger than Imperial Oil. CP is the largest Canadian company and, in many ways, the most profitable company. If I read the table I have before me correctly, its net profits last year amounted to \$583 million. That is a tremendous amount of money, yet CP wants more. It is not prepared to talk about going ahead with necessary expenditures on rail and on double tracking through the mountains because it wants an increase in freight rates from grain producers. Grain producers are facing tremendous increases in costs on the one hand and, on the other, they are being asked to pay more for moving their grain. They will be in such a position that when it comes to filling up their tractors with diesel fuel in the morning to go out to their fields, it will cost between \$400 and \$500. That is the cost producers see in the next two or three years. It is understandable that producers face this revision of the Crow rate with some apprehension.

The hon. member for Vegreville very ably pointed out this afternoon that producers do not want to get themselves into a position of looking at open-ended escalation of freight rates without knowing what they will get in return.

I have before me the Revised Statutes of Canada. If producers are going to pay more, they would like to know what they will get in return. I refer to page 6438 of the Revised Statutes of Canada. Section 262 of the Railway Act dealing with accommodation states:

The company shall—

(a) furnish, at the place of starting, and at the junction of the railway—

The company is supposed to furnish equipment.

(b) furnish adequate and suitable accommodation for the carrying, unloading and delivering of all such traffic;

(c) without delay—

(d) furnish and use all proper appliances—

(e) furnish such other service incidental to transportation as is customary or usual in connection with the business of a railway company—

That guarantee is now in statute form. The government set up a situation whereby the railways must guarantee performance.

I see my time is running out. Let me make a final point about another reason why producers in western Canada are concerned about the Liberal government and its attitude about the Crow rate.

On January 18, 1967, Bill C-231, dealing with the National Transportation Act, was before the House. One of the clauses in that bill was the following:

No later than three years after the coming into force of this section, the Commission (CTC) shall inquire into the revenue and cost of railway companies subject to the jurisdiction of Parliament that are attributable to the carriage of grain and grain products at the level of rates established or maintained pursuant to Section 328—

In effect, that was an attempt in 1967 to remove the Crow rate. This matter was debated in the House, and it is recorded