

Transportation

Mr. Woolliams: I will be brief because I spoke fairly extensively when I first rose on this point of order. But with the greatest respect to the minister I say to him now that he is dragging a red herring through the discussion of this subject. The principle at issue is not the way in which a review is to be brought about. The principle at issue is what the subject of the review should be, and the subject of the inquiry is to be the Crowsnest pass freight rate, a statutory rate.

You will have noticed, Mr. Chairman, that while the minister was dragging this red herring across the path in an effort to make something which is bad and invalid appear good, he never once dealt with the arguments which have been advanced from this side of the committee. Let him admit now that 99 per cent of the statutory rates are represented by the Crowsnest pass freight rates. We have almost a billion bushels of wheat this year on the prairies and it is transported by the railways at the Crowsnest freight rates. No other commodity shipped on the railways compares in volume of shipment.

Is the minister trying to tell us that if he has, shall I say, a hair and a body and he fits the hair to the body he has constructed something which is essentially different? The minister has never come to grips with our arguments, especially our contention that this amendment is substantially the same as what was intended in section 329. The review would be the same. The evidence would be the same. The results would be the same. The decision would be the same.

I say to the Chair, with the greatest respect, that I do not see how it is possible to get around this situation. To do so would ruin the rules of the house. We would see the same thing being done day after day and the responsibility for it would rest upon the shoulders of the minister. What is this section all about? The one question it raises is whether the Crowsnest pass rates should be reviewed or not. With his genius, and only he has that kind of genius, the minister has added a reference to the other statutory rates. But when someone asked him last night what those rates were, do you know what the minister said? He replied: "I do not know what they are." Mr. Chairman, they amount to only a hair on that body of which I spoke a few moments ago. Yet the minister says it adds up to a difference in principle.

Mr. Bigg: I do not like to waste the time of the committee on questions of procedure and rules but it was only on Friday last that the

minister reminded me that we might make a little progress by following the rules which we set down for ourselves. I should like to take this wonderful opportunity to throw that observation back at him.

An hon. Member: Did you catch it, Jack?

Mr. Bigg: This should not be an occasion for argument. It should be an occasion for guaranteeing to western Canada and the maritimes the historic rights which belong to them and which are required by them in order that they may exist. It is a matter of survival.

I can only reach the conclusion that pressure has not come from the C.N.R., because if the C.N.R. makes a loss we have to pick up the tab. The only possible reason for such an amendment as we now have before us is that the minister is being pressured by other vested interests which wish to see all our rail rates revised and some of them thrown down the drain. The railways have more than been repaid by the generosity of the government in land, mineral rights, rights of way through cities, and monopolies in carrying the mail.

• (5:40 p.m.)

We all know that when this omnibus bill becomes law those who interpret it will not be able to go behind the statute and say, "This is what the members of parliament wanted and intended." Instead they will read it and take it word for word. This amendment seeks to do through the back door what parliament refused to allow to be done through the front door.

We are not going to buy a pig in a poke. We want this legislation to be specific in as many of the clauses as we can make specific. We do not want a review of the Crowsnest pass rates to the detriment of the people in western Canada and the people in the maritimes. Those rates are the foundation of our survival in the economic life of Canada.

If the minister is bona fide in his intention to have more consideration given to rapeseed, flour and other products which will be shipped through Churchill and other ports, then instead of accusing us of styming our own farmers why can he not put a provision in the bill, in plain, simple words that everyone can understand, that the Crowsnest pass rates will be honoured forever? There is great wisdom in the suggestion made by the hon. member for Acadia that if the minister does not intend to attack those rates then let it be spelled out in this amendment. There would then be no argument about it.