

*CNR and Air Canada*

Clearly, it looks as if trade is growing. I continue:

These statistics show Vancouver to be not only the busiest port in Canada but the busiest on the West Coast of North America. Only Long Beach, Calif., comes close. It handled about 27 million tons last year.

Most of the shipments through Vancouver are in bulk cargo—grain, sulphur, coal. Grain shipments have been held up not only by trouble at the port but because of delays on the railways which have been blocked by more snow slides than at any other time in memory.

The view of shipping people here is that the rail delays merely emphasize the lack of co-ordination in transportation systems that is slowly strangling the port. One official said this week: 'It's too late now to do anything about 1972. The port has been oversold and we're going to pay the consequences.'

But officials are looking beyond 1972. The startling increase in port volume forecast for this year is regarded as a portent of even greater problems ahead . . . The federal government has said it expects much of Canada's economic expansion in the years ahead to take place in the Pacific.

The federal government in this case means the Liberal party, Mr. Speaker, and they expect some trade expansion in this area.

Vancouver is the main funnel for east-west trade and the volume it will be asked to handle sends chills through port officials. The feeling is that Ottawa still does not—

I underline "still does not."

—appreciate these problems. A remark by Transport Minister Don Jamieson last November struck shippers as rather heartless and cynical. He said: 'I don't have a dollar's worth of business that I can justify expenditure of public funds on.' Delegation after delegation has gone to Ottawa in search of a listening ear and found none, even though Vancouver has been blamed by western farmers and businessmen for not living up to its responsibilities.

Vancouver can't do anything without a nod from Ottawa. The appointment earlier this year of a long-awaited Vancouver Port Authority raised hopes. But officials are puzzled by what they regard as a persistent lack of urgency in Ottawa's attitude. They have sought dock improvements, more up-to-date equipment, more container facilities not only as local amenities but as vital necessities for the good of the country as a whole.

Port officials believe the problem will have to be tackled on a broad scale. Rail and road operations will have to be dovetailed with improved port facilities in a total system that will provide alternatives when lines are blocked or delays of any kind are encountered. For instance, it's felt that much of the grain that's delayed between here and the Prairies could be diverted to U.S. rail routes.

I take exception to that suggestion. If we must use U.S. railroads, then we must. Surely to goodness, Canadian railroads will be able to haul this grain. I continue:

It's also felt that pressure in the congested Vancouver harbor area could be relieved if the increased bulk traffic were switched to Roberts Bank, 30 miles south of Vancouver.

That article, Mr. Speaker, sums up in language better than any at my command some of the problems afflicting the port of Vancouver.

May I also refer to a paragraph in the Palliser Wheat Growers Association bulletin or newsletter of February 29, 1972. It says that the Vancouver grain handling system can be termed a Mickey Mouse operation, and that that system appears to be obsolete. It goes on to say:

Improvements can still be made in it, but with limited trackage through Vancouver, and at the terminal elevators, coupled with the time-consuming cleaning process, it is very unlikely that the port can increase its throughput enough to allow for increased sales to Pacific Rim countries.

• (1650)

The point I am trying to make is this. The government has actively sought new trade in the Pacific rim countries, and for that I compliment them. They have not tied in the transportation with this important trade, nor do they appear to be looking at the problem as thoroughly as they should. If you are going to improve one line of your business, you have to improve some of the facilities that service the increased business. The government has been lacking in its efforts to do something about the problem with which it is faced.

There are some very urgent things that should be done at this time, even though they may be temporary measures. I will only give some examples because I do not claim to be an authority on transportation. We might look into unit trains or renting diesel units or boxcars from the United States. Perhaps we could divert boxcars from other sources and, if necessary, have more overtime. We should do whatever is required. Let us not lose any business. In view of the unemployment problem in Canada, we should not lose any business. By giving some thought to this problem, we might create employment for some of our unemployed by supplying some of the transportation needs of this country.

With regard to long-term measures, we should consider another rail line to the west coast. Perhaps we should make more adequate use of the northern route. Judging from the use that is made of the port of Prince Rupert, one would almost think it was not there. Is Vancouver the only port in British Columbia? Possibly we should make better use of the port facilities at Prince Rupert. Why not expand this port and make more use of that route? I ask the parliamentary secretary if any study has been made of this route or any studies with regard to shipping grain out to Prince Rupert? Is consideration being given to making greater use of this route? Attempts should be made to solve this problem. I would be sympathetic if some mistakes were made. However, I am not sympathetic toward a government which sits on its hands and does nothing. In the field of transportation we have done nothing for too long, particularly with regard to shipping grain to the west coast.

I have been farming for over 20 years in a part of this country that has been faced with grain shipping problems. Whenever we have a big grain sale abroad, it is always said that we do not have the facilities to handle it. After 25 years, something should be done about this problem. It has been suggested that the CNR or CPR join one end of the PGE and use that route into Vancouver. I am not in a position to say whether this would be a good move, but I suggest that we look into it. These problems will get worse if we do not do something about them. If the organizing efficiency is not improved, we can count on the problem becoming worse. The government tends to react to emergency situations instead of planning in advance.

I want to commend the government on the block system on the Prairies. If the parliamentary secretary wants to take credit for this, that is all right. The block system is an improved system of handling grain. The many elevator agents, station agents and people involved in the movement of grain to whom I have talked have almost univer-