

Transportation

evidenced by this clause and by the stand taken by the parliamentary secretary.

We can see that he is a little concerned about this. It will jeopardize his chances of following in the footsteps of the present Minister of Transport when he goes to other pastures. We can understand his concern in that regard but we cannot understand the Minister of Transport, who apparently thinks that the Crowsnest pass rates will jeopardize the rest of Canada. It was those rates which brought Canadians together and which caused the development of the grain-growing industries in western Canada which has been one of the mainstays of our economy. Hon. gentlemen opposite should know better than anyone else the value to this economy of the grain shipments as reflected in the returns during the last two years while they have been in office. Had it not been for that grain trade the financial position of this government and our trading position in the world at large would have been different from what it is at present.

I plead with the minister to withdraw this clause. I do not think it serves any useful purpose. If the railways really think that they will sustain losses at any particular time, they will still have an opportunity to come forward and make that claim. Surely we should not write into the bill a clause setting down that three years from now the whole question should be reopened, and asking the railways to pattern their affairs in the next three years in such a way as to enable them to make a claim on the government of Canada with regard to the handling of grain, and then enabling them to set rates in accordance with the decisions that are made in that regard.

I am surprised that the minister should allow such a clause in the bill at a time when the railways are showing such large profits. No one in this country can seriously suggest that the railway companies are losing money on the movement of grain. If they were to modernize their facilities to a larger extent they could make even greater economies and therefore reap larger profits than at present. If this clause is left in the bill there will be no incentives for the railways to modernize their grain handling facilities and to try to bring about greater economies in that regard. I hope the minister will say that he is willing to have this clause removed.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I will not speak at any length but I do think that the hon. member for Rosthern and the hon. member for Acadia have made statements to which I must make a brief reply. I wish to reply in

particular to the statement of the hon. member for Rosthern when he suggested that by putting something into this bill the government called into question the Crowsnest pass rates. If anybody called the Crowsnest pass rates into question it was the MacPherson commission and Mr. MacPherson was not a notorious supporter of the Liberal party. In fact he narrowly escaped being the leader of the hon. gentleman's party. He was also from Saskatchewan. Mr. MacPherson, who was appointed the head of a commission by the right hon. gentleman who now leads the opposition, said categorically—and all but one of the commissioners supported him—that the Crowsnest pass rates were not compensatory. He made a recommendation that there should be an annual payment made to the railways because these rates were not compensatory.

This was done by a commission appointed by the last Conservative government. Not only that, but the hon. member for Qu'Appelle and the Leader of the Opposition have both told us that they had prepared a bill to carry out the recommendations of the MacPherson commission; and I know that, of course, because I inherited the bill. I brought in a bill to carry out those recommendations, but then I changed my mind. I decided that I was not going to call the Crowsnest pass rates into question, that instead of saying that they were not compensatory and asking parliament on the basis of the royal commission's report to give compensation to the railways, I would ask parliament to authorize a three-year review to see whether or not they are compensatory, and in that way remove them from the field of doubt.

● (9:30 p.m.)

All hon. members on the other side of the house who have spoken so far, particularly the hon. member for Acadia, the hon. member for Rosthern, and I thought, with slightly less conviction, the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, have said that they were confident the Crowsnest pass rates were compensatory. If they are, then why all this worry about an inquiry? Why this worry about having the facts established if hon. members know what the facts are?

I suggest there are three ways in which the railways can be compensated for the carrying of grain. The first is by the rates paid for carrying the grain. If an investigation shows the railways are being adequately compensated, then that disposes of the matter and makes it perfectly clear that the hon. gentleman is as right as he professes to believe he