

position, because producers who have been struggling under the burden of these surpluses are able to produce, confident that no new inventories are building up. Products are moving out at about the same rate as they are produced and this is a much more satisfactory way in which to be running the dairy industry in this country.

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): Members over there do not like to hear these things.

Mr. Olson: Oh, I know. It is terribly hard on those hon. members opposite. They think there is an election coming on. When they get on the hustings, I know one thing: none of them will mention the dairy industry if they can help it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Olson: And none of them will mention the grain industry if they can help it. When I get through talking about hogs and beef and vegetables, and so on, I do not know what hon. members opposite will find to say in relation to agriculture.

Mr. Benjamin: I should like to ask the minister a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): The hon. member may do so if the minister agrees.

Mr. Benjamin: I appreciate the minister's courtesy. He made some comments earlier in his speech and I chose not to interfere until he was through. I agree with him that it is not his fault or the fault of the Liberal government if there are five-foot snowdrifts in British Columbia. But if we can move 800 boxcars today, after the snow has drifted, why could we not move 800 boxcars a day before there were any snowdrifts around Vancouver?

Mr. Olson: I am surprised the hon. gentleman should ask such an elementary question. He ought to know enough about the transportation industry, having been in it for a while, to understand that there is not much purpose hauling more boxcars to Vancouver per day than can be unloaded in that port. Today this number can be unloaded because of the tremendous improvement the government has made possible through the use of the block system which allows much more efficient use of our transportation facilities.

It was not very long ago that most people thought it would be absolutely impossible to get more than 550 or 575 carloads per day unloaded at the west coast terminals. This was the absolute upper limit, and even this was sustainable only for a day or two. But with the block system the operators know what is contained in every car before it gets there. They know the kind of grain the Wheat Board has ordered and they know which cars it will be in. Difficulties were overcome by having the grain companies exchange paper rather than cars.

These are some of the reasons we can now put 800 carloads a day in there and get them unloaded. In the past, under the system which was then in effect it was, of course, impossible to get 800 cars unloaded in Vancouver. But because of the progressive steps taken by the minister in charge of the Wheat Board and those concerned in the industry itself we have been able to increase the capacity

Speech from the Throne

to unload cars in Vancouver by as much as 50 per cent in the past two years.

• (2110)

Mr. Benjamin: Would the minister permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. The hon. member can ask a question only if the minister agrees to answer.

Mr. Olson: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to answer any more questions. Hon. members also know that two and a half or three years ago the maximum number of carloads that could be unloaded at the head of the lakes was slightly over 1,000 a day, though on some days it was as much as 1,100. During certain weeks from December through January at Thunder Bay day after day 1,700 carloads a day were unloaded. I repeat that we should commend those people at the elevators, who work on the railways and in the grain industry, for this very significant improvement. What is more, this improvement was made without adding hardly any additional capital facilities but simply by making better use of what was available already.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. Is the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg) rising on a point of order, or does he wish to put a question to the minister?

Mr. Skoberg: Mr. Speaker, I have a question, if the minister will permit it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): The hon. member may ask a question only if the minister wishes to answer it.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, I should like to answer questions, but I must say a few words about other commodities and I am afraid I shall run out of time.

Mr. Skoberg: Then let us get back to cheese.

Mr. Olson: I shall have something more to say about cheese. There was some significant improvement as well in 1971 in the beef industry.

An hon. Member: Another marketing bill.

Mr. Olson: There has been no need for a marketing bill for the beef industry because beef is one of those commodities that takes time to reach the stage of overproduction. I sincerely hope that the beef industry will never have the serious problems encountered by the dairy and hog industries during the past year and a half or so. I say that very sincerely, even though there were some improvements in the beef industry in 1971.

The question of price is important, of course, but so is the fact that we have made some progress in changing the grading system so that beef production in Canada will now be geared more to what the housewife wants to buy. While the immediate impact of this kind of change will probably not be felt for some time, there is nevertheless a good market for beef. Indeed, as we move into the future we should be more concerned—if that is the right word—about the profit margin of the beef producers, both producers of feeders as well as feed lot operators.