

number picked at random to check the costs. Further review may well vary that upward or downward.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Chairman, I intend to be only four or five minutes. I believe there are a couple of items, one in particular, that should be emphasized at this time. So far in committee the members have been talking about the hopper cars and their purchase. One concern that is very evident in my constituency, and indeed across the province of Saskatchewan, is that these hopper cars can be used on roughly 50 per cent of the trackage. There is considerable concern in the minds of many people that this situation will probably expedite the abandoning of branch lines in many parts of Saskatchewan. I believe this presents a very serious social problem in terms of the small marginal farmer and the rural way of life. I believe on February 8 last the Saskatchewan legislature debated such an item. I wish to spend two or three minutes putting on record why they recommended that no railway abandonment be carried out until 1980, that is, until further studies have been carried out and the government of Saskatchewan gives prior agreement.

• (1630)

Mr. Chairman, the purchasing of the hopper cars, no matter what the intention might have been, will I suppose have some bearing on expediting the abandonment of railway lines which cannot accommodate the new cars. If the railways decide to go ahead in Saskatchewan and abandon the lines they wish to abandon, it will mean that about 35 per cent of the rail lines will disappear—about 3,000 miles of the 8500 miles of rail lines we have in the province. This will disrupt the economy as far as many rural people are concerned. May I remind the House that the Government of Canada donated land, mineral rights and other things to the CPR many years ago. These are matters we should be considering should the applications to the CTC go through.

In terms of elevators and delivery points, one or two other statistics which have come to my attention are, I think, shocking. There are some 2,700 elevators in Saskatchewan. If the branch lines are closed, about 800 of them will close down. About 375 elevator points will disappear altogether from Saskatchewan. The railway companies said they lost about \$27 million in 1969 as a result of servicing the branch lines. The government of Saskatchewan has commissioned a study to determine the effects of the abandonment of branch lines across the province, as well as the effect of such abandonment upon the prairie region as a whole. No final conclusion has been reached but many facts have been revealed in interim reports.

One of the things those engaged in this study say is that if the lines are abandoned—and I believe there is a chance the hopper cars will expedite this process—it will cost the farmers in the prairie region \$20 million a year because they will need to transport their grain to elevator terminals by other means. It would also mean an additional cost to the taxpayers. If railway lines are removed, some of the tax base will be gone and an extra charge will fall on businessmen living in small communities, for example. It is stated that every year, on average, every mile of railway line which is eliminated will cost the prairie

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economy an additional \$1,525. Additional costs will arise in terms of highway expenditures, amounting to between \$5 million and \$12 million. And, as I say, it will mean the elimination of part of the tax base available to communities.

We are concerned about the cost of the hopper cars. We are concerned about who is to pay the bill for servicing and maintenance. There is a group in Saskatoon which has carried out a study. Those taking part have found that of the 540 communities in my province, about 200 will disappear completely in the next two years and a further 100 will have populations of fewer than 25 should these proposals for rail abandonment be carried out. That is a measure of the profound effect such a decision would have on the province of Saskatchewan and, indeed, across the Prairies.

We are all familiar with the shift of population from the countryside to the cities and the disappearance of the small farm. I wanted to spend just a few moments alerting the minister and the committee to the concern felt by myself and by my constituents, most of whom are small farmers, are operating farms of average size or live in small hamlets and villages from one end of my constituency to the other. I hope the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, the minister of industry and others will take very seriously the points I have raised when they consider long-term planning as it affects grain handling and transportation in Canada.

The Deputy Chairman: Is the Chair to conclude that this completes the examination of vote 30a of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Harney: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise this matter before we move to the next item on the list. I know we agreed the other day that we would proceed through the schedule item by item. This appeared to be a reasonable decision at the time and I agreed with it. I also know that the schedule is arranged alphabetically, which appears to be reasonable because this is one matter most members of the House will, I am sure, agree on—that there is an order of precedence in the letters of the alphabet and that these letters are roughly comparable in English and in French.

There is one thing, however, we are not taking into consideration. It is that the titles appear alphabetically according to their English names. The point is this: although we may pay respect to the French language by giving the French equivalent of the English names, the titles are nevertheless in the order in which they would appear under the English names. If we were to arrange the titles according to their French names, a different order of precedence would emerge, one which at any rate would mean quite a bit to me and to other members representing urban constituencies.

[Translation]

We must consider, Mr. Speaker, that if we had drafted this schedule in the French alphabetical order of the departments, we would not have spent the past two days discussing only the problems of agriculture, but we would have perhaps been able to deal with the problems of