

The Address—Mr. J. H. Horner

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, in participating in the throne speech debate we should, I suppose, pay particular attention to some of the things in that speech. Of course, it deals with the fact that a minority government is in power in Canada. Minority governments may not be bad. The speech tells us how successful the minority government hopes to be in the coming session.

Minority governments have become the rule rather than the exception in the western world, as is evident from the results of the recent election in Britain. As I said, such governments are not necessarily bad. Some of them might be quite good. In the speech, the government mentions the alienation of western Canada and how it hopes to alleviate or eliminate that alienation. After listening to this morning's news, I realize that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) does not intend to alleviate or eliminate the alienation of western Canada. He hopes to use it to his own advantage, since there is a possibility of an election later this year. He wants to use that fact to obtain a majority, so that he need not be so nervous in this House.

● (1220)

The Speech from the Throne makes reference to the age old chestnut of freight rates, and how the government intends to eliminate discriminatory freight rates in western Canada. Because Canada is divided into regions this problem has been with us for 100 years. There is much talk about the Crowsnest Pass rates. I will deal with them at length in a few minutes. However, with regard to eliminating discriminatory freight rates, if western Canada did become a separate country there would no longer be any discriminatory freight rates. The freight would either move at comparable rates or not at all. The railroads would be serving western Canada and not eastern interests as they are today.

The Speech from the Throne touches on many agricultural subjects. It is interesting to note they are geared toward increasing supply. In the speech of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), which is recorded at page 112 of *Hansard* for March 4, three things are specified. The minister said, and I quote:

The government's food policy has been set, first, to make sure that Canadians continue to have an adequate and dependable supply of wholesome food and, second, to ensure that food continues to be available at prices that are reasonable for the consumer and adequate for the farmer.

The second is nearly the same as the first.

The third objective of the government's food policy is to develop a continuing Canadian supply and increasing production—

All of a sudden the government is obsessed with continuing supply. A few years ago they wanted to limit supply, and there was much talk about supply management. The government is still playing around with that idea. The concept of supply management of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang) in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board was illustrated by Operation Lift, a colossal failure which cost western Canada millions and millions of dollars and cost the Liberal party millions and millions of votes. It should cost the minister his seat.

The third interesting point is the much talked about movement of grain. What is the boxcar situation? It is true that cars capable of carrying grain have decreased from

[Mr. Speaker.]

88,000 to 44,000. How many boxcars will be needed to move the 16 million bushels of wheat which the minister said must be moved before the end of July in order to meet our commitment? If the turn around time on a boxcar is three weeks, we would require something in the neighbourhood of 24,000 cars. It is not right to say there is an absolute shortage of cars, but it is right to say that the cars are not moving. There have been many pictures showing boxcars sitting idle on sidings. The railroads have not put their heart into the movement of those cars. Let us analyse why they have not done this.

There is a great lobby taking place on the prairies. The minister in charge of the wheat board has travelled across Canada attempting to convince farmers and farm organizations that the root of the trouble is the Crowsnest Pass rates, how terribly low they are and how they have to be changed. The minister from western Canada is deliberately trying to destroy those rates. He is encouraging the railroads to destroy them. How can they do that? By not moving the grain. No wonder the minister is not getting the co-operation of the railroads. He is encouraging them. He is in bed with them.

A former Minister of Agriculture, a nice fellow from Renfrew, Ontario, was politically astute. He knew the one thing he had to do as Minister of Agriculture. He attacked the railroads. He attacked the CPR. You do not hear the present ministers attacking the railroads. They want to wreck the Crowsnest Pass rates. Many farmers agree that possibly they should be changed.

What do the Crowsnest Pass rates really mean to western Canada? To move 100 pounds of grain from Regina to the Lakehead costs 20 cents under the Crowsnest Pass rates. To ship 100 pounds of grain from a point in the United States directly south of Regina to the Lakehead would cost in the neighbourhood of 72 cents. It would cost two and a half times more, quite a difference. With regard to grain moving from Regina to Vancouver, it would cost 26 cents a 100 under the Crowsnest Pass rates. From a point directly south of Regina to Vancouver, it would cost 96 cents, two and a half times more. With wheat selling at \$5.85 a bushel, many farmers say they can afford to pay the extra rates, but it is necessary to move the grain. I am not certain the price of wheat will remain at \$5.85 a bushel. However, I am absolutely certain that if the Crowsnest Pass rates are wrecked, the cost of moving grain will be two and a half times greater and that cost will never come down. The farmers must realize this.

The minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board is supposed to work for the farmers, not the railroads. He is supposed to make the railroads work for the farmers. However, the minister is in bed with the railroads. He certainly is not concerned about Saskatchewan farmers or, in fact, farmers generally on the prairies. The minister's announcement that wheat used for human consumption within Canada would be frozen at \$3.25 illustrates that fact. He stated the government would pay an extra \$1 a bushel. The farmers of western Canada must pay an extra 85 cents a bushel on top of that. We hear a lot of talk about the increased price of bread. Canada has become a nation of consumers of bread, so bread is the last thing that should be subsidized. If housewives find bread too expensive, they can always go back to baking their own. That is