

Grain Transport

language, and that is the reason it has not been tabled in the House.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I will try to keep my remarks brief so that the hon. member from the NDP will have a chance to contribute to this debate. Prairie farmers are sick and tired of studies; they want to see action. The first light at the end of the tunnel came for hundreds of prairie farmers when the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) was the minister of transport. He gave the farmers some hope by appointing Dr. Hugh Horner to the position of grain transportation co-ordinator.

● (1740)

Farmers have become rather depressed because this government's lack of action has set them back ten years. The parliamentary secretary stated that the government wants action and that is what we on the prairies want as well. I would now like to outline some of the concerns of the prairie farmer, Mr. Speaker.

The stage was set for improvements at Prince Rupert to be well under way by this time. The contract was not signed until September, however, so it is questionable how much work can be done over the winter. The entire summer season was lost through the inaction of the National Harbours Board and the lack of aggressiveness on the part of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin). Now that an agreement has been signed and the first contract let, I hope we will see action and be able to reap the benefit of that eight million ton bushel terminal on Ridley Island.

I should like now to deal with the problem of the railways losing money. When the original contracts were made with the railways, in many instances they began the construction of branch lines. The elevators, coal mines and so on, resulted from that. The railways were also given \$1 million to provide the country with passenger and freight service. As well, they were given one million acres of land and all of the mineral rights. Today, when the railways claim to be losing money, they count only the money from a particular branch line and refuse to include the vast amounts of revenue from mineral rights, hotel concessions and the other businesses they operate. Because they now separate one section of their business from the others, they claim to be losing money.

In particular, the CPR received ample compensation for the Crowsnest rate. Prairie farmers will be very reluctant to give that rate up unless they are offered something comparable. They have given up concessions too many times without receiving anything in return and have suffered as a consequence. I think the government should require the railways to include in their profit statement the vast sums of money made from mineral rights. That item should not be kept separate from others in the operation of the railway. The railways were given those mineral rights with the understanding that they would give rail service to the country but now they separate the operations as though they had no relationship whatsoever. I know that divorce is common but this divorce should not be permitted. The mineral rights were given as a concession for

operating the railways, and that is what they should be required to do.

Prairie farmers have a few complaints about the Crowsnest rate as well. It is now being used as a means of cheap transportation of feed to the east, particularly Quebec where the provincial government subsidizes the production of hogs and feed. This means that the western cattle and hog producer cannot compete. The Crowsnest rate, combined with the subsidy, makes for unfair competition and the federal government should do something about this.

A lot should be said about branch lines, Mr. Speaker. On Friday I presented a motion under Standing Order 43, regarding the branch line from Rosedale to East Coulee, serving a coal mining operation, the one from Kneehill to Carbon, a grain operation, and one that I did not mention, from Strathmore to Langdon, which is also a grain operation and is required by the town. The CTC heard the applications from the CPR in connection with the Carbon line and the Strathmore line in 1978 and now they are applying again. Just yesterday, the mayor of Strathmore told me that potential business is being lost to the town because it is not known whether the railway will be there next year or not. This is a trick on the part of the railways—to keep applying and applying until they wear down the resistance of the Canadian Transport Commission. It just is not fair. When the railways branch of the CTC makes a decision after a full investigation, that should hold good for at least five years, preferably ten, so that there can be some stability in the situation and industry can be attracted to particular areas.

I hope the Minister of Transport will ensure that these repeated applications by the railways every second year will not be tolerated. It keeps potential industries out of the communities. I have mentioned three cases and I can only guess how many more there are across the country.

In Vancouver, the port will not accept grain from large transports. In the United States, large transports travel a few hundred miles to take clean grain to the terminal right at the seaport where it is loaded. But the Vancouver port refuses to accept grain from some transports. This leads one to wonder whether there is a connection with the railways to make sure that it is hauled by them. If the transports can offer fair and reasonable competition they should be permitted to do so.

There should be facilities at inland elevators to clean grain. The Rockyford Terminal Association was formed by a large group of farmers who put up their own money to show what can and should be done to clean grain and get it to the market, given a fair chance.

This leads me to another grievance that the farmers have, Mr. Speaker. They have no say in how long they must wait to load the grain on a ship. They have no say about whether the workers at the Vancouver port will go on strike tomorrow or next week, as they have gone on strike so many times over the years. A few years ago the pearl barley market was lost to the United States and we never got it back. Strikes were intended to hurt the ruthless employer, but today they are hurting innocent people like the prairie farmer whose livelihood is