

make that speech and we used it as a reference point. We are not going to stray from our argument in that regard. If he wants to change his suggestion and make it 40 or 50 terminals, I accept it, but the minister did make a speech in which he guaranteed there would be something like 40 inland terminals—

Mr. Lang: Never.

Mr. Korchinski: That speech was made about five years ago. If that were the case, the railways would not be justified in using 60, 70, or 100-pound rails, or whatever the weight is, since the minister has indicated that certain lines are going to be closed. After all, the railways are not stupid; they will latch on to every bit of information they can get. They will not do any more than they have to. I remember at one point the railways had decided to build a bridge until it was discovered they had to maintain rail service at the same time. Although the government can put pressure on the railways to do something, it cannot guarantee it will be done.

We have seen closing of rail lines and of stations. Although the government has said it is going to put pressure on the railways, where is the estimate to indicate that this will be done or that any particular line will be improved? The people are being fooled; it is as simple as that. We are not being honest with the people and telling them what is going to happen. I am sure the railways will not be allowed to close down the line between Keewatin and Kenora, or the Tisdale to Reserve line. I should like the Minister of Transport or the Minister of Justice to tell the committee now how much money they are going to put up. I hear hon. members laughing, but if these closures happen in their areas they will not laugh so much.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

• (1530)

Mr. Korchinski: You can hee-haw at this particular time—

An. hon. Member: Order.

Mr. Korchinski:—but I tell the committee that nowhere in western Canada is this matter being greeted with hee-haws. No Liberal who would go out there and read this speech which indicates that they hee-hawed. That would not endear them to the people there. I am not too concerned because I knew exactly what the reaction would be. The reaction is a natural one when you do not give the farmer an opportunity to reduce his costs of production or delivery costs.

The Chairman: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time allotted to him has expired. The point of order raised a moment ago, to the effect that members are asked to address the Chair, is a perfectly proper one. When one hears the word "you" being used, one expects that the words are being addressed to the Chair rather than to a member on the opposite side. Such a member should be referred to by constituency.

Mr. Stewart (Marquette): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few remarks on these estimates because the movement of grain is of great importance to western Canada.

Supply

The future plans of the government and its transportation policies are being questioned by many people. Not only do they affect the largest industry on the prairies, agriculture, but they also affect the future of many rural communities.

Last year, when the government announced it intended to purchase 2,000 hopper cars to improve the movement of grain in the Prairies, there was a great fanfare from the government to the effect that this would be a major step in solving the grain handling problem in western Canada. We all know the problems Canada has faced in respect of moving grain to world markets in the last few years. Ships have been waiting for grain in Vancouver. Because of severe weather conditions, according to the government, we have seen grain move at a snail's pace to the west coast. All these delays were at great cost to the farmer and also affected our future export markets for grain.

It seems odd to me that the government waited until an election year to announce the purchase of these hopper cars when these problems had been facing us for many years. So far as I am concerned, this was just another smokescreen by this government to cover up its mismanagement of western agriculture. It sounded great in other areas of Canada that the government finally was assisting western farmers by an expenditure of \$48 million. Did the farmers really benefit from the purchase of these hopper cars? I would question this and the farmers question it. I feel the greatest benefactors were the railway companies and the foundries in eastern Canada which built the hopper cars.

At the time the announcement of the purchase was made, we in the opposition asked the government how much trackage in western Canada would be capable of handling the hopper cars. The government said that we were just spreading gloom and that we should not worry. This year, when the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board appeared before the committee on agriculture, he admitted that less than 50 per cent of the railway tracks in western Canada are capable of handling these hopper cars.

At the present time nothing concerns western farmers more than the question of rail line abandonment. This affects many communities in the Prairies. By its plan to purchase these hopper cars I say the government is merely accelerating its program of rail line abandonment which most farmers strongly oppose. We hope the minister will explain why this program is being accelerated. How can areas that are fighting rail line abandonment survive if the tracks are not capable of handling hopper cars? Why did the government not tell the CPR and the CNR that it would purchase these hopper cars provided they upgraded their roadbed and tracks so that the majority of areas would benefit from this mode of transportation? The railway companies have an obligation to the Canadian people: they are heavily subsidized by the taxpayers of Canada, yet in many areas they are not prepared to offer any kind of service.

We know that most branch lines are protected until 1975. Every year the railways accept a subsidy and at the same time decrease service on their branch lines knowing that after 1975 they will just close them down. They should be using these subsidies to upgrade their branch