

*Supply*

Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources would be one of the first to tell him that.

There are a number of other issues that are important when it comes to moving grain, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago the hon. member for Lisgar made a statement to the effect that the port of Churchill should be abandoned; that we should not haul grain to the port of Churchill. I wonder if that is Conservative party policy? During the election campaign the Conservative party advocated using the port of Churchill, and indeed that its use be increased. Where do they stand on the question now?

These are questions that should be answered when we are dealing with the supplementary estimates. Perhaps the great Minister of Finance or the President of the Treasury Board could enlighten us before the debate ends.

I should like to point out to the House, Mr. Speaker, what the effect would be if the Crow rate were abolished. According to the 1977 Snavely report, if the Crow rate were abolished prairie farmers would lose \$290 million, and with spin-off effects this would take over \$1 billion out of the western economy. We can take the town of Wakaw, in the Prince Albert area, as an example of what this would mean. The Crow rate from Wakaw to Vancouver is 24 cents per 100 pounds of grain. The CN charge for grain on domestic shipments to Vancouver is \$3.12 per hundred pounds—or 13 times Crow.

It is important for the government to tell us where they stand on Crow rates, Mr. Speaker, because on November 19 the people of Wakaw will be voting in a byelection. One of the questions they are asking now is where the Conservative party stands on Crow and whether they will have to pay 13 times more than they do now to ship their grain if they keep this government in power. Where do they stand? I ask that question because we have had conflicting stories from ministers across the way. The Minister of Transport wants them reviewed. The minister of energy said that the Crow would be guaranteed. I want the Minister of Finance or someone responsible on the other side to tell us precisely where the Conservative party stands.

● (1640)

There are many more things one can say about the supplementary estimates that are before us. There are many more things that are important to prairie farmers. But on the Crow itself, which is perhaps the most important and emotional issue out there, the Minister of Transport is talking about the possibility of the Crow benefit being extended to farmers in other ways. For example, he said that perhaps the money set aside to maintain branch lines could be used to subsidize the farmers. If he used that money, what happens to the branch line?

These are questions that have to be answered. Is it the intention of the government across the way to abandon these branch lines? In the election campaign we were told that any line would be kept open if the elevator company on that line was willing to provide service and have a decent elevator to

[Mr. Nystrom.]

handle the farmers' grain. Now we have a one-man task force appointed by the Conservative party, namely, the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil), who is studying rail line abandonment and what to do about that question.

These are important questions because the previous Liberal government has intentionally allowed the grain handling system in this country to become run down over the last 16 years. Yesterday in Calgary the Minister of Transport said that the Crow rate may be abolished, or that the Crow rate in this country may be changed.

Next we come to the Wheat Board. We are dealing here with supplementary estimates, and in that connection I include the Canadian Wheat Board. I want to know what the government's intentions are regarding the Canadian Wheat Board. There are some members who are very powerful in the Conservative party. The hon. member for Lisgar is listened to as the eyes and ears of the Minister of Transport. It has been said that we should have more competition, more free enterprise and more of the open market, and that the port of Churchill should not be utilized. Does that mean we will have less and less for the farmers in the estimates when it comes to the Wheat Board or when it comes to using the port of Churchill?

**An hon. Member:** Wait and see.

**Mr. Nystrom:** The hon. member across the way says wait and see. I am very nervous about what I am going to see. That is why I am not waiting before registering my objections to the direction which the Conservative party and the Government of Canada seem to be taking.

The minister who yields a lot of power, the minister in charge of privateering, is privateering almost everything. I want to know what plans there are for the Wheat Board, for the Crow rate and for the Farm Credit Corporation. These are things that are most important to prairie farmers and for which they fought for years and years.

I am sure you will know, being a farmer yourself, that the Hall commission recommended the Wheat Board be given more power to co-ordinate grain transportation and that the grain movement co-ordinator should be a Wheat Board employee. What did the Conservative party do? The government appointed Hugh Horner. As I said, little Jack's brother was appointed to that powerful position of grain transportation co-ordinator.

What about Hugh Horner? I have no doubt the guy is sincere, intelligent and competent. But what is his attitude vis-à-vis the Canadian Wheat Board? I think he is biased against the Canadian Wheat Board. Hugh Horner was quoted by the press as saying that he would like to see the quota system abolished. That is the very system that creates equality of delivery opportunity for farmers, be they small or large. Hugh Horner would like to abolish that system. It seems to me that he now has immense power in his hands.

Where does the Minister of Transport stand when it comes to some important issues like the quota system, the Wheat Board, quarterly marketing, the Crow rate, the Hall commis-