

National Harbours Board Act

if this 1,200 miles of railroad is taken out 13,500 farmers will be affected, which would mean that we would have to have a storage elevator and a terminal at Tisdale, from which we could ship our grain to Churchill. At the present time there is only an average of about 20 million bushels going out of Churchill, but people who know something about the situation say that this figure could be increased two or three times if our grain companies or the wheat board agree to put more grain through Churchill. If this were done our customers in Britain would benefit very much, as well as the Scandinavian countries.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, although this bill, as you have said, has to be withdrawn, I can assure you, even though it is withdrawn, that we cannot solve the problem just by so doing. Steps must be taken by the government, either now or later on. The problems of storage and abandonment must be solved before it is too late. I understand the railroads have already applied to the board of transport commissioners for permission to go ahead with this abandonment, and I should like to stress that serious consideration should be given the matter. Mr. Speaker, I had much more to say about this bill, but I know many hon. members are interested in the problem and I am sure the house would wish to hear their comments.

So before six o'clock I will withdraw the bill as you have suggested, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, rising to participate in this debate, as this is the first occasion upon which I have taken part in a debate in this house may I take this opportunity of congratulating you, sir, even if belatedly, on your election as Speaker. I am sure that you will be a most distinguished Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Sharp: I am not very familiar with the history of this chamber, but it must be very rare indeed for a minister of the crown to make his maiden speech on a private member's bill and to make it on budget day when he has no chance whatever of getting any publicity. I do so, however, because this bill relates to the improvement of grain handling facilities on the prairies, a matter in which I have had a continuing interest throughout my career and of course in which, as Minister of Trade and Commerce, I have a very lively interest today.

It has been my good fortune to have had a wide experience both in business and in government, and ever since I was of the tender age of 14 years I have been connected in one way or another with the handling of western grain; the only exception was the

[Mr. Rapp.]

four years that I spent in the utility business. When I assumed my present office and the Canadian wheat board was retransferred to the jurisdiction of the Minister of Trade and Commerce I felt as if I were once again on familiar ground. It has been a source of great gratification to me, sir, to be able to work once again with my friends in the Canadian wheat pools and their grain handling organizations, with the united grain growers and with the private trade, all of whom have contributed to the development of the present facilities for handling and selling Canadian grain. May I say, sir, that since taking office I have been very much impressed by the evident desire of all these groups to play their part in improving the machinery for the marketing of Canadian grain. I am happy that this is so, because there is certainly much to be done and, if I may say so, sir, it cannot be done only by government or even only by the Canadian wheat board; we need the co-operation of all those in the country who are concerned with the efficient handling of Canadian grain.

This is not an occasion, sir, for my entering into an extended discussion on Canada's grain marketing situation, and I am sure you would stop me if I were to attempt to do this. But I hope I may be permitted in this, my first speech in this house, to make a brief reference to the grain marketing situation as it was when we assumed office a relatively short time ago. I do not intend to bore hon. members with a long statistical statement; instead, I would like to quote just three sentences from a document that will be familiar particularly to hon. members from agricultural areas in the west as well as in the east, namely the recent submission of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to the present Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Hays) on May 8, just about two weeks after this government took office. The sentences I would like to quote are under the heading "Grain policy" and they read as follows:

The first requirement of western grain policy is of course to take all possible measures to maintain and increase exports of wheat.

I would like the house to mark the following words:

There has been a decline in exports in the present year, and the movement at opening of navigation has been disappointing. This situation gives cause for real concern and the most aggressive measures and constant attention to export possibilities are required.

Now, sir, from some of the comments made in this house by hon. members opposite one might have concluded that when they left office exports of grain were improving; that sales were high; that everything was in good shape. I put these words on record now in