

My concern is that if all these lines are not kept in the permanent network, they will probably be referred to the Canadian Transport Commission. This means that they will have to go through the regular process of holding hearings before a decision can be made on what should happen to them. This could take three years, four years or perhaps as much as five years. During that period of time the rail companies will not know whether they should spend any money on these lines and, in all probability, they will not spend any money because of the uncertainty that if they do spend money and the line is abandoned, it will be money which was not spent wisely.

In addition, the grain companies will not be in a position of certainty to know whether or not they should maintain their facilities. What we will have is a situation, if it is allowed to drag on, where these branch lines will be abandoned simply because of the indecision of this government. This is strange to me considering that the government said in the throne speech that "rail facilities will be upgraded and port facilities improved".

It seems to me that what has happened in the three months since the throne speech has been exactly the opposite in terms of rail facilities. I find that very unfortunate, and I urge the Minister of Transport to clear up this matter and indicate that he is willing to see the lines which were put into the permanent network by order in council remain with service guaranteed to the year 2000. I urge the minister to see that those lines remain. The sooner he makes a statement to that effect the sooner he will get rid of the uncertainty which clouds these lines in western Canada. It is affecting something like 7,000 or 8,000 producers in the three prairie provinces, and the sooner that decision is firmly made, the better it will be for everybody in terms of knowing where they are going with regard to rail transportation.

The next thing which was talked about in the throne speech after rail facilities was that port facilities would be improved and upgraded. I would like to make reference to two ports, the Prince Rupert project and what is going on in the port of Churchill.

Churchill has exported not a lot but a significant amount of grain. This is very important to the people in that town who depend on grain for jobs during the summer. It is basically the only employment available to the port of Churchill over the summer. I had the privilege of travelling to Churchill with the former minister of transport last November 21 when the *MV Arctic* came in with the icebreaker *Pierre Radisson*. In using the icebreakers, the season was extended by approximately three weeks. This was a boost for the port of Churchill and it signalled to that port that the previous government was serious about trying to make as good use of that facility as it possibly could.

As I found out during my trip to Churchill, Canada has one of the best icebreaking technologies in the world. It was a very good idea to make use of that ice-breaking technology in terms of extending the shipping season at Churchill. Our record as a government in terms of making use of the port of Churchill is excellent. As I said, we extended the shipping by making use

of ice-breaking technology by some three weeks, which had never been done before.

It was also the intention at that time to bring in an icebreaker to open the port earlier than usual. If the government had followed that plan, the port of Churchill would have opened earlier than normal. Unfortunately, what it looks like for this year is that the port of Churchill may not be in a position to ship very much, if any, grain at all. I have a telex dated July 4 which says:

Canadian Wheat Board announced on July 4 that no grain would move through Churchill this season unless farm deliveries increased.

They are blaming the fact that farm deliveries are down for not having enough grain to get to the port of Churchill. That is a rather flimsy excuse. If the government were really serious about making use of the port of Churchill, there were three or four months prior to July 4 during which farmers were delivering grain and the CN was hauling grain to Churchill. If the government had been serious about making use of the port of Churchill to the extent which it can be used, it would have had grain shipped to that port ready for export. I find it unfortunate that we will not be able to make use of the port of Churchill this year to the extent it should be used.

I would like to refer briefly to the port of Prince Rupert, which has long been known as a good port. The facilities there for handling grain are not necessarily what they should be in terms of meeting Canada's exports in the future. The goal of all parties, I think, is to increase our exports by 50 per cent, or to attempt to get to a point where we can export 30 million tons of grain out of Canada by 1985. To do that, we must make better use of the port of Prince Rupert.

Within two months of the previous minister of transport, the hon. member for Vegreville, assuming office he had a memorandum of understanding on the construction of the new facility at Prince Rupert. This required a considerable amount of negotiation, I am told. There was a considerable amount of good will on both sides in order that this agreement of understanding could be signed in such a short time. Within less than two months of the now Minister of Transport assuming office, he called into question the whole construction timetable in so far as the port of Prince Rupert was concerned. The Minister of Transport did this by questioning the amount of money which the federal government would be willing to put into the port to handle the cost of some of the infrastructure. In addition, upon assuming office the previous minister of transport, the hon. member for Vegreville, also approved the site at Ridley Island and reached an agreement with the consortium, based on some \$40 million of federal government money being available to handle the cost of some of the infrastructure. Unfortunately that has been delayed. The deadline for signing the agreement, I understand, has been postponed three times from the original date of March 30, 1980. The final date for signing, as I understand it, has not yet been set.

What we have seen in the period of time that this government assumed office is that the port of Churchill will not be used to the extent that it should be and that the timetable for