

Adjournment Debate

that but there is no question that Mr. Bryden had in fact acted as a consultant for the Dominion Marine Association on a previous occasion. At that time it had made a recommendation against the expansion of facilities for the port of Churchill.

The minister tried to explain on Monday by saying that a consultant was something like an advocate or a lawyer and that somehow, depending on the brief the consultant was given, he could change his opinion. Mr. Speaker, I found it rather peculiar, that the minister would suggest in this House, in apparent seriousness, that a consultant could somehow come to a different conclusion with respect to one particular fact situation. I find it an appalling demonstration by the minister of some sort of concept of flexibility on the part of consultants, when we are trying to establish the facts which determine the necessity of developing a particular facility, or the expansion of a facility, for the port of Churchill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to bring something to the attention of members of the House this evening by pointing out that, notwithstanding what the minister said on Monday, there is very clear indication that Mr. Bryden, in his report to the minister, in fact recommended against the development of this inland terminal at Yorkton because he is convinced there would be no purpose served in expanding the port of Churchill and the facilities at the port of Churchill. Mr. Bryden indicated in his report that, in the course of the study and during discussions with various sectors of the industry, it became apparent that there were serious reservations to be raised with respect to additional exports through the port of Churchill. It has been admitted by the minister that the consultant shares his views. This has been admitted in interviews with one correspondent in particular.

As I pointed out to the minister on Monday, the recommendations of the Bryden commission fly in the face of the recommendations of the Hall commission. I cannot understand the minister's attitude. Coming from the west as he does, he should understand that the development and expansion of the port of Churchill is a longstanding western dream. How he could engage a consultant whom he knew would come down with recommendations against that point of view is difficult for me to understand. This minister purports to represent western interests of the country.

● (2212)

Other things have happened. When Mr. Justice Hall was asked about this particular study, he pointed out that the Bryden consultants did not consult the researchers of the Hall commission. Mr. Justice Hall stated he was at a loss to understand why the Bryden consultants did not use the research done by the Hall commission to come up with a recommendation to the minister. He did not contact any of these researchers with regard to his final conclusion. There has been very substantial criticism of this report.

In this regard and with regard to other aspects important to western interests, particularly the statutory Crowsnest rates, he has indicated he is interested in abolishing the statutory Crowsnest rates and replacing them with another system. He

[Mr. Hnatyshyn.]

is against the extension of the port of Churchill. This makes me wonder about his ability to speak on behalf of western interests. He takes positions diametrically opposed to the hopes and aspirations of western Canada.

An appropriate observation was made by Don Griffin, the president of the Hudson Bay Route Association, to the effect that these consultants went well beyond their terms of reference. He had asked the minister to engage a firm of consultants who would work in tune with western interests. In this case the consultants fell very short of the request of Mr. Griffin and the Hudson Bay Route Association.

The parliamentary secretary is here this evening. I hope he will indicate that the minister is interested in obtaining new information and will take a positive attitude with regard to the port of Churchill. I hope he takes a positive attitude toward the recommendations of the Hall commission and will not support any attempt to undercut the Hall commission recommendations in this and other aspects so important to western Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles Lapointe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I wondered for some time whether I should answer that question tonight because the Department of Transport gave me the required information only in one official language of Canada which is not mine. Even though I regret that, in all respect for my colleague and friend from Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and considering the importance of the issue he raised, Mr. Speaker, I will try to express myself in Shakespeare's language to answer some of the statements made by the hon. member.

[English]

The hon. member stated that the port of Churchill is a longstanding western dream and that we should have a positive attitude toward it. May I point out that in 1978 significant sums were allocated by the government of Canada to improve port facilities in Churchill. Capital expenditures of \$5.5 million have been allocated to Churchill in 1978 for such work as scale automation and metrication, port lighting, winter berthing facilities, repairs and dredging. These actions in support of the development of the port of Churchill speak for themselves.

● (2217)

The consultant was engaged for the express purpose of evaluating the economic feasibility of an inland terminal elevator in the Yorkton area, or alternatively a number of strategically located high throughput elevators, originating grain for the port of Churchill. The construction of any elevators is, of course, dependent upon the prospect of a favorable return on investment. The purpose of hiring a consultant, as the opposition may be aware, is to obtain a professional opinion as to probable future costs and revenues accruing to a particular prospective investment. In order to get the best possible opinion, we hired a consultant who had had experience with Canadian grain terminal elevator construction.