

### Wheat Sales

dime cheaper on every bushel to use the port of Churchill. Of course, I realize that not all wheat exported by way of the St. Lawrence ports is bound for Europe, but I am quite confident that most of it is.

When you consider that the savings involved in using the port of Churchill for such operations is almost \$1 on ten bushels, and that we are talking here of hundreds of millions of bushels every year, it is absolutely astounding that the government does not do all it possibly can to make sure that every bit of Europe-bound wheat is exported by way of Churchill. In fact, the situation is even more startling than that. Last year over 154 million bushels of barley were exported from this country. And how much went by Churchill? Less than 5 million bushels of over 150 million bushels.

The government would have us believe that all is well with regard to its handling of the port of Churchill. On June 19 last the minister responsible for the Wheat Board told the House that the Canadian Wheat Board has an outstanding record with regard to the port of Churchill. He told the House that the most recent negotiations up to that time with the Russians by the Wheat Board had resulted in a firm commitment by the Russians to ship some grain by the port of Churchill for the first time. Despite what the minister stated, the use of the port of Churchill by the Russians is nothing new. According to the National Harbours Board, between 1966 and 1968 over 75,000 short tons of grain was shipped to Russia by way of the port of Churchill. But notwithstanding that fact, I think it should be very clear by now that the Wheat Board's use of the port has been anything but outstanding.

The port of Churchill has yet to even draw within sight of its potential. The government itself effectively demonstrated an appreciation of that fact when it announced, ostensibly to achieve this end, that it would embark upon a \$5 million program to rejuvenate the port. Of this amount, \$2 million was put in the estimates of the National Harbours Board to be spent this year. Even that \$5 million, however, is ridiculous. Mr. Taylor, chairman of the National Harbours Board, told the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications on May 22 last that even he believed—

—\$5 million will not likely do anything of great consequence in Churchill.

He said, further, that even at that time it was unlikely that \$2 million worth of work can be done to the port of Churchill this year. There must be sufficient lead time before the work can begin, and even now it might be too late to do any work this year. That is why it is imperative that operations begin immediately.

The Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) seems to have a set pattern of considering the matter for many months, waiting for reports for a few more months and then deciding that it is too late to do anything substantial. Then he finds that March 31 rolls around and the estimated amount of money to be spent is no longer available to him. This seems to go on year after year.

Why has nothing been done? The Minister of Transport knows the answer best. Up to a few weeks ago he said he was waiting for a report on how proposed expenditures on the port could best be made. However, when Mr. Taylor told the Standing Committee on Transport and Communi-

[Mr. Taylor.]

cations at its meeting on May 22 that the report was indeed complete, the minister acknowledged that fact in the House. But there was a problem. The minister found several aspects of the report unsatisfactory and for that reason returned it to the marine administration of his department for further comments. Of course, the question arises as to why the Minister of Transport would commission a report in the first place if he was not willing to accept it when it was completed. The answer to this question, as well, is best known to the Minister of Transport. Nevertheless, we are now waiting for the report on the report and valuable time is passing. Another point to be noted is that the \$2 million proposed expenditure is not definitely allocated, and if it is not mentioned in next year's estimates nothing can be done.

There is a great deal that can be done to increase the capacity of the port of Churchill. The harbour next to the wharf should be deepened. The turn around basin should be deepened. The grain galleries should be lengthened and modernized to suit the larger ships now using the port. There should also be increases in the grain storage capacity. Moreover, there seems little reason why the shipping season cannot be lengthened. Statements by Dr. Arthur Mauro when he was chairman of the Manitoba royal commission inquiry into northern transportation have been cited as typical of several reports on the subject. Dr. Mauro stated that the season for unstrengthened vessels could be increased to 113 days, and for such vessels assisted by ice breakers, to 214 days.

The institution of such practices, coupled with improved facilities, should make nothing but good sense to the Minister of Transport and, as I have said, even if the season is not lengthened the volume of grain sent to the port of Churchill can be greatly increased. Apparently, however, the minister has chosen to ignore these facts. We still await that report on the report and the game goes on.

One thing we can learn from all this, however, is that apparent, skilful political manoeuvres do not make for skilful government. The government has taught that lesson with its handling of the port of Churchill and the people of the north, as well as the people of the entire prairie region, are the worse for it. Development of the port of Churchill is absolutely essential to the continued well-being of and the maximum return to farmers for their agricultural and other products produced in the west. I submit that the motion presented to this House deserves the support of all hon. members who have any regard for the welfare of western Canada.

● (2040)

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, out west we do a lot of curling. In fact, out west there is hardly a town or village in any province where we do not do a lot of curling. But every winter while we are curling we have a lot of other people who sit around behind the glass. It is called curling behind the glass—and that is where the best curlers are. They can call all the shots and tell how they should have been made, after they were made. They can call all the strategy, after it has been done. That is what we have had today, Mr. Speaker, from members of the official opposition, the mover of the motion and those who followed him. They have been the best curlers