

his head. He is now piloting some Liberal goodies through the House of Commons. Perhaps that is why they are embarrassed to speak. They are looking for any excuse to avoid participating in this debate.

● (1630)

I want to say to my Liberal friends that some very important things are happening in this country, and so it does no harm to spend a few hours on this stage of the debate. When government members were in opposition they used to do this quite often.

I should like to refer to one issue which I think is very important, Mr. Speaker, and that is the speech made in Calgary yesterday, by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Mazankowski), who is responsible to the Canadian Wheat Board, to the United Grain Growers. We are dealing today with the estimates that concern transportation, the movement of grain and things that are very important to farmers in the west. I should like to quote one or two things from that speech. The minister said:

I am frustrated—

I suppose he is frustrated at being a member of that cabinet. He continued:

—at present because we are passing up sales—perhaps worth \$1 billion per year—because of limitations in our transportation system. I can't help thinking what it would mean to producers and to Canada if we were exporting 50 per cent more grain and oilseeds. There would be a tremendous increase in cash flow and net income for producers. The additional sales would earn Canada \$2-\$3 billion a year in badly needed foreign exchange. . . . And it would generate an additional \$4 billion a year in domestic economic activity.

I want to make the point here that we are dealing with a resolution on the estimates of the old Liberal government. The administration which Otto Lang headed as minister of transport cost this country literally billions and billions of dollars per year for the movement of grain. The Minister of Transport says that about \$1 billion was lost last year because the grain could not be moved, and an extra \$4 billion was lost as a result of reduced economic activity that would have been attendant upon the movement of the grain.

I think it is important to register our dissatisfaction with the amount of money provided in the supplementary estimates for the movement of grain. I want to make it clear that I expect the Minister of Finance (Mr. Crosbie)—the Ayatollah Crosbie—to include several hundreds of millions of dollars to repair the branch lines on the prairies and to purchase hopper cars when he brings down his budget. The Minister of Transport is complaining that the grain was not moved due to the inefficient system left the country by 16 years of Liberal party rule.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nystrom: I hope the Minister of Finance realizes that his backbenchers are applauding, meaning they agree this should be done. I see him nodding—I can hear him from here! I hope he takes very seriously representations made by the backbenchers of his party and by members of this party. We cannot afford to lose \$4 billion per year. It would seem to me

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good economic sense to invest a few hundred million dollars in order to reap an additional \$4 billion per year in economic activity in the west.

I have another concern about the speech made by the Minister of Transport in Calgary yesterday, Mr. Speaker. He spoke of the possibility of getting rid of the Crow rate or changing it. He said that if there is any change of application of the Crow rate it will have to be coupled with adequate service guarantees. This morning, speaking on the CBC, he elaborated on the possibility that the Conservative party may change the Crow rate. I do not know what kind of change they are thinking of, so I think it is important that someone in the Conservative party should make their stand clear as soon as possible.

I should like to take a moment to point out to members of the House how important the Crow rate is to Canadian farmers, Mr. Speaker. Many years ago the CPR was given a lot of land, mineral rights and property. In return for that, they guaranteed to haul the farmers' grain at a set price in the years ahead. That price is set in the statutes of this country, and to the farmers that is very important. If the Crow rate was varied it would cost farmers from 400 per cent to 600 per cent more to haul grain to market, compared to the cost for the equivalent distance in the United States.

During the election campaign last May the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Hnatyshyn) said that if the Conservative party was elected it would guarantee retention of the Crow rate. The Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) has not given that assurance, however, and now the Minister of Transport is saying that they are considering getting rid of or changing the rate.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the spirit of Otto Lang lives; the spirit of Otto Lang is reincarnated in the Minister of Transport!

An hon. Member: Be serious.

Mr. Nystrom: I am being very serious, Mr. Speaker. Many members of the Conservative party have spoken about abolishing the Crow rate. The Hall commission report, however, recommended the retention and extension of the Crow rate to cover processed raw materials.

Just a week or so ago I heard the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) comment on the radio that the Crow rate should be changed. The Conservative governments in Alberta and Manitoba have spoken about altering the Crow rate. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Hargrave) has said that the Crow rate should be altered. As well, the newly appointed western grain transportation coordinator, Hugh Horner, brother of the famous Jack, has spoken of the possibility of abolishing the Crow rate.

Where does this government stand, Mr. Speaker? Do they stand behind the Crow rate? Do they stand behind the farmers of western Canada? The member for Lisgar says, "Oh, baloney". I am sure he knows whereof he speaks because he speaks a lot of baloney about Crow rates. I am sure that the