

in other quarters of the chamber, to say how deeply gratified we are to find that the hon. gentleman who has just taken his seat is able to return and associate with us once more.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

Mr. CAHAN: But to proceed—

Mr. MILLAR: May I ask the hon. member a question at this moment?

Mr. CAHAN: I do not know enough about the subject to answer questions with any greater degree of accuracy than I am doing.

Mr. MILLAR: Can the hon. member give me, from Mr. McLachlan's report or from any other source, any good reason why the cost of handling grain over this railroad and at the elevators should be doubled, trebled, and in some cases quadrupled, as compared with any other route?

Mr. CAHAN: All I can say is that I ask the hon. gentleman to give the same earnest attention to these reports that I have given myself, and I am accepting them as the best information available to me. The information set forth in detail there—in greater detail than is possible for me to quote—appeared to me at least to throw the gravest possible doubt upon the practicability of sending grain from the middle west via Port Nelson to European ports at less cost than it can be sent now via the Montreal route.

Mr. MILLAR: You just have to swallow the bald statement.

Mr. CAHAN: No, I do not swallow the bald statement. I am studying the engineers' reports with such intelligence as I possess and with such experience as I have had. I am giving a certain credence to them and I have learned nothing anywhere that disputes the information therein contained. That is as far as I am going.

Even if you carry the grain to Port Nelson there is then the difficulty of finding ships. The other night when, on another motion, I was carrying on a discussion with the Minister of Railways and urging him to use his influence with the officials of the Canadian National Railways to transport grain over that system to the ports of Halifax and St. John, I pointed out to him that, after the close of water navigation on the St. Lawrence, the grain rates from Fort William and from lake ports to Halifax and St. John were exactly the same as those to Portland, and exactly the

same as those to New York, Baltimore and Norfolk, Virginia, and I argued with some vigour that, in view of the fact that the grain rates were the same, a certain part of the grain transportation of the Dominion during winter months should be given to the ports of Halifax and St. John. We all know that Halifax is open every hour of the year. We know that exactly the same can be said of the port of St. John. We all know there are lines of steamers each week from St. John to Liverpool, and that there are lines of steamers connecting with European ports which regularly call at Halifax. We know as well that these are ports which are open to secure tramp steamers on very favourable terms. We also know that the rate of insurance, even in winter, is not high from St. John or Halifax. And yet hon. gentlemen opposite—and if I am not mistaken, the hon. Minister of Railways, but I would not like to misquote him—suggested that the reason why grain could not readily be sent via St. John and Halifax was the alleged fact that ships were not available there for carrying grain.

Mr. DUNNING: No, I did not say that.

Mr. CAHAN: Well I was certainly confronted with that statement by some hon. member opposite. I had suggested that we could provide the ships at St. John and Halifax in such numbers and of such capacity that there was no reason why St. John and Halifax should not participate in that grain trade transportation. Think of those ports open the year round, with certain liners coming week by week, with tramp steamers calling there almost week by week throughout the year; and yet it is claimed that they do not come in sufficient numbers to facilitate the export of grain. Compare that with Port Nelson, open for the grain train two and a half months in the year at the most, closed in the estuaries till late in the season, so that if ships could even enter the straits and find their way through the fields of ice which are sometimes found in the Hudson Bay, they would be waiting for days for openings in the ice to get into Port Nelson and to the wharf. How are you going to procure the availability at Port Nelson of ten ships which are necessary even to begin the transportation of wheat from that port? How are you going to obtain ships of a construction, a class and a quality capable of performing that service, in view of the fact that they have to encounter the field ice at the most critical time during every month of the summer. Those