

*Adjournment Debate*

future is so precariously unstable. CN's decision, compounded by the government's refusal at least to reassure these people, has left everyone with the impression that their livelihood and future are in jeopardy. The people of my riding are furious about the announcement. Feelings of exasperation are outweighed only by feelings of helplessness.

It can be argued that upgrading of a rail line that is so important to many people must be in the national interest, so it is incumbent upon the government to see that money is made available should the recommendations of the Hall Report not favour Churchill. In any event, I believe the government should promote exports through Churchill. If the port was promoted, then the rail line to Churchill could be very profitable to CN, for example, if commodities other than grain were moved.

The government must also promote greater co-operation between Canadian National Railways and the Canadian Pacific Railway in transporting commodities to the port. The government must also encourage the Canadian Wheat Board to make greater use of the port. But the single, most important matter with which the government should deal expeditiously is the upgrading of the rail bed between Gillam and Churchill so that it can handle the new hopper cars. As I pointed out earlier, Churchill has a lot to lose if that project is not completed. The whole future of the port depends upon its ability to handle the hopper cars.

I urge the government to take my comments into serious consideration, for the future of the port of Churchill rests in its hands. I would like to say in closing that the people—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired.

**Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the hon. member has raised this matter this evening. At the outset I want to assure him that the government does not share his pessimism regarding the future of the port of Churchill. About four years ago Canadian National Railways announced a program to upgrade its rail line to Churchill. This program would enable grain in the new style hopper cars to be handled all the way through to the northern port. Work has proceeded from the south and upgrading has generally been completed as far as Gillam. This leaves the northern section, known as the Herchmer subdivision, still to be upgraded.

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Canadian National has applied, under the provisions of the Railway Act, to receive subsidy on the Herchmer subdivision. The Canadian Transport Commission has reviewed the case and subsidy payments were made for the years 1973, 1974, and 1976. No payments were made for the 1975 because of heavy sulphur shipments. The Canadian Transport Commission found that in that year no loss was in fact incurred on this line and no subsidy was therefore payable.

Earlier this year the Canadian National vice president for the western region announced at a Hudson Bay Route Asso-

ciation meeting that the railway had decided to delay plans for completing the upgrading work. The reason given was that the Commission with respect to the costs of transporting grain by rail, the Snavely Commission, which reported last December, found that the line was not a "grain dependent line." The interpretation by the railway seems to have been that because of the Snavely finding, the railway would not be eligible to receive reimbursement for capital investments made in the line. Quite frankly, it is hard to understand this reasoning because there is provision in the branch line subsidy program of the Railway Act to make such payments. The findings of the Snavely Commission really are not relevant in this context.

Canadian National has requested that its upgrading projects be treated as operating expenses so that they can be recovered through the subsidy process in the year in which the expense is incurred, rather than over the long-term life of the asset through depreciation.

The whole question of railway upgrading on this and other lines is one which will be taken up with the railways in the very near future. The Hall Commission on the prairie grain handling and transportation system has addressed itself to the over-all question of railway rehabilitation and upgrading and it is, of course, advisable to wait for this important report rather than to adopt an ad hoc approach to the prairie rail line problem. The Hall report is expected to be published at the beginning of next week.

In the meantime my hon. friend from Churchill can be assured that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang) is in contact with Canadian National, specifically in connection with the Herchmer subdivision. The importance of that rail line to the continuing viability of the port of Churchill is fully appreciated. Every effort is being made to ensure that the rail line does not restrict the port from playing its full role in future grain export programs.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the parliamentary secretary but his allotted time has expired.

MULTICULTURALISM—PROVISION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING IN VANCOUVER SCHOOLS—GOVERNMENT POSITION

**Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock):** Mr. Speaker, on May 3 I directed a question to the Minister of State responsible for Multiculturalism (Mr. Guay (St. Boniface)), and I asked of him information regarding the plans of his department to help the Vancouver School Board to provide a better standard of education for those students in the school system of Vancouver who need training in English as a second language. The minister's reply was confusing. It confused me, and also shows how confused the minister himself is. Even after several points of order had been raised he still could not get the matter straight. Eventually I dropped the subject and wrote him a letter. That I found it necessary to write a letter shows, I think that the minister does not know what is going on in the department. Finally, I sent the minister all the material