

Northern Canada Transportation

and we know that it is much easier to conduct a study than to carry out the necessary action.

With regard to the use of the Port of Churchill, we in the New Democratic Party are concerned over yesterday's announcement of the Crow rate changes. There are two elements of that program which could have drastic effects on the use of the Port of Churchill for grain movement. First was the announcement that all rates may not be equal for equal distance across the country. That means that the Government or the Canadian Transport Commission, depending on which is given the final authority, may allow the railways to charge different rates for grain being shipped the same distance. This is not allowed under the present Crow rate provisions. One must charge the same rate per mile or per kilometre, regardless of the route.

Our second concern is that the rail lines may be allowed to charge different rates for unit trains, which only carry grain, and that the railways could have complete freedom to determine the routes on which they offered the unit cars. If that were indeed the case, the situation could arise where the CN and CP would offer special low rates for unit trains to the Port of Thunder Bay or the Port of Vancouver, but would not offer that same rate for unit trains destined for the Port of Churchill. That would have not only the effect of killing the Port of Churchill, but also of forcing farmers from the Churchill catchment basin to truck their grain to terminals on the main line. That would hardly be energy-efficient. It could cost people who work on the railways and at the Port of Churchill their jobs, yet it would not increase the profit to farmers. There is a danger involved, and I certainly hope the Government takes that under advisement before it introduces any changes to the legislation which comes under the Crow umbrella.

The issue concerning the Port of Churchill does not receive much attention in the House of Commons although it is very important both to me and to my riding. Yet quite often the Government ignores the central role of that Port in its studies and actions, which has been a problem. In the past, I think there has been some rivalry between the Northwest Territories and the Port of Churchill, which was only natural. But I believe that if there were adequate studies and reasonable research, we would find that in many cases adequate development and use of the Port of Churchill could result in even more savings for the people of the Northwest Territories. I would hope that the Government would spend money to do adequate research, but sometimes we do not find that to be the case.

I mentioned earlier that a study of air service from Churchill to the Northwest Territories is being conducted, but it is isolated from other studies of transportation in northern Manitoba. Once again that points out my central theme. The Government is spending much money on transportation, consultants and research, but it tends to be spending it a little bit here and a little bit there. If we had what I would call a regional-based transportation policy, we could consider the entire transportation system within a region. Then we would

not have pockets of research here and there which have little or absolutely no value after the research is done.

• (1700)

We have a saying in the Port of Churchill that it has been studied to death, and I am sure that is a phrase that has been used in other parts of Canada as well. I am sure that the Northwest Territories, both the eastern and western halves, feel that way as well. They feel they have been researched to death. Yet what they also believe is that there is very little in the way of Government action.

We believe, and I am sure other Members from the northern parts of the Provinces and from the Territories would agree with me, that if the Government is going to take an activist role, and I certainly support that position, it must do so based on fact and not only on political goodwill but on adequate research and adequate economic data. I think if that were the approach of the Government, then we would see Northerners much happier with Ottawa. We would see Northerners feeling that their lives are a concern of the Government, that the Government is not going to issue regulations which would shut down airports for certain hours in the middle of winter and threaten the lives of Canadians, that they will not find that the Government is spending thousands and thousands of dollars doing research and then ignoring that research. We would find that we would have a transportation policy for shipping, for air, for rail, that would help all Canadians.

Mr. Peter Ittinuar (Nunatsiag): Mr. Speaker, because the generality of this motion by the Hon. Member for the Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) lends itself to one of the most informative and most boring debates I have ever heard in the House, I would like to bore the House further on certain aspects of northern transportation.

The previous speaker's comments on Churchill bring to mind a saying that we from the Northwest Territories have about Churchill and that is, it being overstudied, each family in Churchill includes a scientist and a polar bear.

I wish to bring Transport Canada's Air Administration to bear on the issue of northern transportation. First of all, the continued expansion of the air transportation industry north of the 60th parallel is inevitable. Government and industry alike must be able to forecast the demand for air services and cooperate in providing them in a timely manner.

I would also like to describe the general direction that the Air Administration is likely to follow in developing northern air facilities and systems. I will review some of the policy issues that require attention. They are the air transportation planning network, and what could be expected in the way of airports and air navigational systems in the Arctic. Little development would have taken place without the funding by the federal Government and support and co-operation of the Governments of the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and members of the Northern Air Transport Association. This spirit of mutual co-operation is continuing.