

Canadian National Railways and Air Canada

foresight to understand the Canadian situation. They formed the government and they had the most members in this House. They should have understood the Canadian situation. They should have been in the position to suggest that competition would not work on the prairies and in the maritimes, but would only work within the province of Ontario where there already exists competition between various modes of transportation.

● (2120)

I think it is appropriate to comment on the Crowsnest pass rates established in the 1967 act. A most amazing thing happened about which the fourth estate did not even comment. In spite of that, it was still a most amazing thing. I remember making a speech at that time and referring to members of the fourth estate as a bunch of vultures who waited on high until they saw someone in trouble before swooping down and feasting upon the bones. In any event, the Crowsnest pass rates were debated at length at that time. We had a standing vote in this House and the government was defeated by a vote of 58 to 57. It was a free vote, and in a sense it was such a free vote that the then hon. member for Medicine Hat, Mr. Olson, who later joined the NDP—

An hon. Member: The Liberals.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): Yes, he was a Social Creditor then. That was a slip of the tongue. He was right-wing Social Creditor then. He was so mixed up he just sat in his seat and did not vote. He was on the verge of joining the Liberal Party and did not want to vote against western Canada, so he sat in his seat. He could have made that one of the rare occasions when this House of Commons had a tied vote. Had he voted, it would have been 58 to 58; but he was nervous and just sat in his seat. The issue was the Crowsnest pass rates at that time. I said this was wrong, just as transportation competition was wrong. I suggested that the Crowsnest pass rates represented the Magna Carta of western Canada and should be maintained. I still say that today.

The minister in charge of the Wheat Board is engaged in a very successful campaign with the railroads in travelling across this country and spreading doubt, in the eyes of the farmers, in respect of the Crowsnest pass rates. There is no doubt about that. He is carrying out a very successful endeavour. But let him go out and issue as a political judgment that the Crowsnest pass rates have to be done away with, and his head will be on the line and the guillotine will not fall at the next election. I predict that will happen if he is brave enough to put that suggestion publicly before the voters of western Canada.

I was elected chairman of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, although that is not a job I particularly favour. Members wanted me to accept the job. I hope I can lend some clarity in the development of new policy. I believe it is my duty to assist members and this country in developing such new policy. Members of the committee on transportation requested its chairman to write to the Minister of Transport and the government House leader suggesting that the committee be given permission to travel in order to study these problems in the general movement of goods.

[Mr. Horner (Crowfoot).]

We have an excellent port facility at Thunder Bay, but we have only one line on which to move boxcars into the port. We have a conglomeration of lines around the harbour which should be straightened out. There should be easier movement of grain into that port. I think the committee should look into this problem and the inherent difficulties with one line for unloading cars. Farmers suspect that huge costs are paid in demurrage charges. We have never been able to uncover how much. The Wheat Board works for the farmers, but it has never disclosed that cost.

Anyone interested in the operations of the railroads on the prairies knows that there is a question ahead in respect of rail line abandonment that will have to be solved by January 1, 1975. It will have to be decided whether the applications for abandonment should be set over for another year. Some people, particularly in the Manitoba government, advocate that point of view. I really do not agree with them. I have a rail line close to my home that moved 132 cars a week last year and received \$132,000 in subsidies. That's pretty good—\$1,000 per car. I think I could even move that much with my broken down, old Ford truck. Certainly the question of rail line abandonment will have to be looked into. Is the obvious course to put off rail line abandonment? I suggest that in my area the \$132,000 would be better given to the municipality so that it could build a road over which the farmers could haul their grain perhaps to a more central delivery point. In any event, this is a question that should be looked at in order that the transport committee could clarify the situation.

Let me refer to the question of grain movement through the mountains. The tracks were laid in the early 1900s. The Crowsnest pass rates were developed following the laying of the track to what used to be called the old Kootenay Valley line.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The Kettle Valley line.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): I thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) for lending us that bit of wisdom. He has been here nearly as long as I have. That line used to be called the Kettle Valley line which was spoken about so often in this House by a former member from the area. This track was laid 50 or 60 years ago. Surely with the advances we have seen in technology, which have allowed us to move mountains, rock and dirt, we should be able to make some improvements. I suggested in this House a year and a half or two years ago that a line should be built across from Kamloops to the British Columbia railroad at Clinton. I am pleased to learn that some surveys are being carried out in the area.

An hon. Member: That's an example of motherhood.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): Someone suggests that is an example of motherhood. But it was not the case two years ago. This should have been done ten years ago. There should have been an avenue for the movement of grain through the mountains other than by way of the Fraser canyon.

I have noted that the government intends to buy another 4,000 hopper cars. I suppose the Liberal Party can use this fact as propaganda. I wonder if hon. members