

Supply

We now have a price of \$1.59 per bushel for wheat. The minister has entered into long-term contracts with Russia and China. The right hon. member for Prince Albert suggested during the question period today that some 100,000 bushels are still to be delivered to Russia at the lower price. There is still a great amount of wheat to be delivered to China at the low price of the 1970-71 contract. This minister has done western Canada no good at all.

We have had reference to the transportation study which the minister has had conducted by the grains group. An interesting thing about the study which no one has really pointed out is that in respect of the movement of grain it has been carried out on railway rates completely ignoring Crowsnest pass rates. I wonder how many farmers in Saskatchewan really think that the minister they elected to take charge of their product is actively interested in doing away with the Crowsnest pass rates. Are they aware of that fact? I think we will have to make them aware of it before the next election.

I think the minister should be brought to task for harbouring that kind of thought. To me the Crowsnest pass rates structure is the Magna Carta of the west. The minister is attempting to subsidize the railways by giving them \$48 million worth of boxcars. Without having any commitment from them in this regard, he hopes they will repay that amount some day. The minister wants to do away with nearly 5,000 miles of track on the Prairies, about 3,600 miles of which are in the province of Saskatchewan. I wonder whether the people in those areas of Saskatchewan really feel they should return to Ottawa a man who wants to gather up 3,600 miles of track in their province.

The same minister said in a speech to the Alberta wheat pool that he might subsidize the movement of grain because of the cost of long hauls to the farmer.

An hon. Member: Temporarily.

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): Yes, temporarily. The grains group study did not make that suggestion. It suggested that the farmers will have to build more storage and haul their grain over longer distances, but they will then have the 80 inland terminals to facilitate the railways. This Liberal government has been obsessed with the idea of increasing railway revenues since it passed the National Transportation Act in 1967. They are obsessed with that idea, no matter who pays. Apparently the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board will have the farmers paying the cost of this.

The minister has lowered the price of wheat from \$1.81 a bushel, when he took over, to \$1.59 a bushel. He now wants the farmers to pay these additional costs and will see that they do so by removing the Crowsnest pass rates, by making the farmer store more grain on his farm and haul it farther to the elevator at a lower price. It seems to me we must do our best to remove him if he is to remain in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. We must do our best in Saskatchewan to see that he does not come back, so that we might have a more orderly marketing system under which the farmers will pay less, rather than more, and under which the railways will provide more services rather than fewer at a higher cost.

We have seen the final payment figures for barley and we know that there is no surplus of barley. There is to be

no pool in respect of barley. One might expect, with wheat selling today at \$3 a bushel in Vancouver, that the final payment on wheat for this crop year would be 60 cents a bushel. Because of the way in which forward sales have been made at the low price, the farmers will be lucky if they receive another 30 cents a bushel.

• (1630)

It seems to me that the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board has done a disservice to the wheat farmer during the past four years. We might consider his thinking in respect of doing away with the Crowsnest pass rates and 600 miles of track in the province of Saskatchewan, or a total of 5,000 miles of track in the three prairie provinces. There are about 19,000 miles of track in the province of Saskatchewan; therefore he will be doing away with nearly one-third of the total trackage. The closing of elevators will probably result from this. There are now about 1,800 delivery points. The minister wants to cut that figure to 80. I believe there are 105 delivery points in the constituency of Crowfoot alone. On the basis of these figures, this would probably mean that my constituency would be reduced to three, four or five delivery points. Certainly this is not a satisfactory situation in the minds of the constituents I represent.

We are concerned about these things. We believe in the Canadian Wheat Board which, as was mentioned by the right hon. gentleman from Prince Albert, was set up by the Conservative government. We believe in orderly farming for the benefit of the farmer, not for the benefit of the railways. We believe the CPR has been given a gracious grant by the government over the years and that it has provided a good service in return. However, we do not believe the farmers should provide all the money in order to keep the railway going. This also applies to the CNR.

I think we should have a more orderly marketing system and along with it we must have encouragement of production. The Minister of Agriculture, when appearing before the committee on food price trends, said that if the price of food increased further he did not believe in the implementation of a food price freeze. He suggested that perhaps an embargo would be the easiest way to handle the situation. He would license anyone who wanted to export any commodity. I ask hon. members what kind of thinking that is with regard to the production of agricultural goods in Canada.

During the war years we had an embargo on the export of cattle to the United States. This was maintained until 1948. The price in the United States at that time was about 30 cents a pound, while the price on the Prairies was about 16 cents a pound. Finally the Liberal government of the day lifted the embargo and the price of cattle shot up to 30 cents a pound and then dropped again to 16 cents a pound. This shows the effect an embargo would have. It would result in less production in Canada. Our prices would be depressed, while everything we had to buy would be priced on the international market according to cost.

This attitude of the Minister of Agriculture leads me to believe this is part of the contingency plan we hear about in respect of the control of food prices. What will the farmers in western Canada think about a Minister of