

behind. There is no surge capacity between our two major railroads to catch up on shipments. The Canadian Wheat Board just signed a three million tonnes contract with China, not because that is all it wanted to supply to China, not because that is all that China wanted, but because that is all the Wheat Board felt it could live up to in deliveries.

There are two reasons why we are not moving the wheat we could be moving. First, the railroads give low priority to grain movement, and are phasing box cars out of grain service at an excessive rate. Second, the Canadian Wheat Board does not have the authority required to co-ordinate the entire grain movement system. It is compounded by the government's open market feed grain policy, which is plugging the system.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** It is not. Prove it.

**Mr. Benjamin:** My colleague, the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), says it is not. I would refer him to a statement, which I cannot lay my hands on at the moment, I believe from an official of the Canadian Wheat Board—there is also a statement by a minister in the government of Saskatchewan—confirming that off board grain sales are plugging our Canadian country elevator system and preventing the Wheat Board from doing a better job on our export commitments.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** Document your facts.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Both of these problems have been caused by private enterprise governments which say they favour competition and free enterprise in transportation and grain markets. They have forgotten about the competition we have with other exporting countries. They have forgotten that Canadian grain producers compete, they have always had to compete, with the treasuries of other grain exporting countries.

Who is running this country? Is it an elected democratic government and a democratic parliament—

**An hon. Member:** The CPR.

**Mr. Benjamin:**—or is it Cargill Grain Company and the CPR? The railroads, particularly the CPR, are phasing box cars out of grain service at a phenomenal rate. They have reduced our capability to move grain. They are blackmailing the taxpayers and the grain producers. There are not enough railway cars to get the grain to waiting ships even though the government, as I said earlier, has provided the railroads with 8,000 new hopper cars. As the government has bought these cars and put them on stream, the railroads have phased out their own boxcars and utilized these free hopper cars which they got as donations from the taxpayers.

At the end of 1972 the two major railroads had 26,000 boxcars which they owned in grain service. By July 31, 1978, that figure was less than half; there were only 12,800 boxcars available. They had taken 13,200 railway boxcars out of grain movement. The 8,000 hopper cars we provided them is equivalent to 12,000 boxcars. On those figures alone—and there are others to make that picture look even worse—we have some-

### *Movement of Grain*

thing like 1,300 fewer rail cars available for grain movement now than we had before the taxpayers bought any hopper cars six years ago.

The government and the minister have known the railroads are scrapping their boxcars. What have they done about it? The government provided incentives totalling about \$4 million a few years ago for repairs. The railroads have been given another 15 per cent depreciation allowance for purchase of new rolling stock. They now have a deal to repair up to 1,000 box cars each, with the government paying half the cost, and the CPR says that it will not do it. Even if the CPR did do it, it just is not good enough. The Canadian Wheat Board says "We need a minimum of 5,000 repaired boxcars returned to the movement of grain." Not only has the CPR refused to co-operate and repair the boxcars, it has said that it will not repair boxcars unless it requires less than 40 man-hours of work.

Since 1955 the railroads have laid off 48,000 employees. According to Mr. Justice Hall, most of the jobs were made obsolete in the repair and maintenance of way divisions. They were made obsolete by the policies of the railroad management. Let's put people back to work. One way of putting some people back to work is repairing railway equipment which the Canadian Wheat Board says is needed for grain movement.

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We need 4,000 new hopper cars. That takes time. The railroads should be required to order those new cars now so that when they start coming on stream 12, 15 or 18 months from now, they will be available to add to our grain movement capability. However, that will not get us through the crunch coming this winter.

In addition to phasing out boxcars, the railways are giving grain movement a low priority. That is being done for one reason only, blackmail for abolition of the statutory or Crowsnest grain rate. Last year there were grain cars sitting on sidings all over the prairies waiting for days and weeks to be moved, while trains carrying other goods rushed past. The National Farmers Union, in an aerial survey and other investigation by individual members, found 1,213 boxcars sitting on sidings unused, with only minor repairs needed to put them back into service.

The railways' campaign to bog the system down will intensify this winter. Even if we have no snow, they will close hundreds of miles of branch lines for weeks and months on the excuse it is due to winter conditions. This is something the Minister of Transport has not told parliament or the people of Canada, although I am sure Canadians are intelligent enough they do not need to be told.

When the ground freezes in the winter, you can run trains over railway track even if it is in poor condition. The excuse of heavy snow conditions last year applied in a few small areas. In most of the prairies it was an average or less than average snowfall, yet hundreds, of miles of branch lines were closed, some for as long as three months. Our grain producers are getting fed up. I hope the Canadian people are getting fed up