

*Grain Shipments*

shipments through the port of Churchill. The grain shipped from Churchill last year amounted to 22,737,422 bushels. That amount was shipped out of a port that has the potential to ship 40 million bushels. The facilities are there to ship that much grain. However, when I talk to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board and make a few suggestions as to how to bring the shipments up to 40 million bushels, I get the answer that all these things have been tried. I would like to suggest some very positive moves which could make this port a very important grain handling facility as well as a facility for other commodities produced by International Nickel Company, Sherritt Gordon, and so on, because grain shipments are not the only commodity to be considered with respect to the port of Churchill.

● (0020)

One thing that would improve shipments out of Churchill and bring it up to the 40 million bushels it is capable of handling is to co-ordinate the shipments out with the deliveries of grain arriving in Churchill. This means that as the trains arrive in Churchill, instead of having to offload this grain, put it in storage and then load it on to ships, it could be loaded directly on to the ships because the grain is not cleaned in Churchill; it is cleaned in Saskatoon before it is shipped north.

Churchill has a very short shipping season of three months and there have been as many as ten days during the shipping season without a ship in sight: then it is the problem of the Wheat Board, and there will be as many as eight or ten ships sitting in the harbour waiting to be loaded and the facilities can only handle three of the large ocean-going ships at one time. Under the present system, delivery of grain is taken from July 20 to October 20. I suggested that when the Wheat Board negotiates a contract with another country, this period should be shortened, and that if we sell five million bushels of grain to a country the date of delivery should be shortened to possibly July 20 to August 20. This would facilitate getting the ships into the harbour at the same time as the train arrivals.

In order to move 40 million bushels of grain to this very important port in Manitoba, we have to consider transportation. Only a portion of the railway system which runs from The Pas up to Thompson has been upgraded. At the present time, much of that railway is in a state of poor repair. This is causing many train wrecks, which costs the shipping industry a great many dollars. It cannot get the grain delivered to Churchill with only one railway running to that port. I would like to see at least a passing track installed between Gillam and Churchill. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) has said \$20 million will be spent on the upgrading of the rail system to ensure that grain will be delivered. I just hate to think of a strike taking place at the port of Churchill.

**Mr. Benjamin:** It isn't open long enough to have a strike.

**Mr. Smith (Churchill):** If the hon. member knew where it was, he could speak about it; but he doesn't even know where it is. If a strike took place at the port of Churchill when ships were in the port, they could not move to

[Mr. Smith (Churchill).]

another port and pick up another load. These ships would have to go back through the Hudson Bay and try to find somewhere else to load. I hate to think of the problem we would face in trying to encourage shipping companies to come to Churchill when in fact it was not known whether they could load. I propose that the storage facilities at Churchill be increased to meet the capacity of that port, which is 40 million bushels. This amount of grain should be stored at Churchill at all times. Then when we sold wheat to a country we could enter into a contract with a shipping company because we would know there were 40 million bushels stored there. It is a known fact that the storage facilities at Churchill are ideal because of the climatic conditions; there are no heat or humidity problems. Therefore, I propose that the capacity of the terminal be increased.

We read in the estimates for this year, and in the estimates of last year, that \$12.5 million will be spent in Churchill over the next four years. That amount will cover nothing more than maintenance. This government is not interested in developing the port of Churchill.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Neither was the previous Conservative government.

**Mr. Smith (Churchill):** If the government was interested in developing the port of Churchill, it would be taking a much more positive approach to putting in facilities which would handle grain and other commodities to be shipped from the port.

**Mr. Nowlan:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, I have heard my hon. colleague speak for many hours in the past about his interest in the port of Churchill. As I listen to this debate tonight, I look across the aisle at the vacant seats—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order, please. The hon. member knows that this is not a valid point of order.

**Mr. Nowlan:** Madam Speaker, I have listened to the hon. member for Churchill. He has referred several times to the government, the cabinet and the treasury benches—and at this moment, for the last half-hour there has not been a member present there, including my hon. friend opposite who has just taken his seat.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin):** Order, please. If the hon. member wishes to speak after the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Smith), the Chair will recognize him then.

**Mr. Smith (Churchill):** Another thing which really concerns me about the port of Churchill, because of the short season, is that the season could be extended by at least another month if there were proper insurance coverage. Lloyd's of London will not extend insurance coverage after October 20. I believe that if the government were really interested in extending the shipping season in Churchill, it would provide some insurance coverage for the month following October 20 because this past year ships could still have left the port on November 9. With an extension of the ships that come into the port we could be looking at even more than 40 million bushels, but if we even met that target it would be a milestone in grain shipments out of the port of Churchill.