

Seaway and Canal Tolls

the statutory rates which were set in 1922 by a Liberal administration.

I was about to say when I was interrupted that I suspect the cost of shipping grain in Canada today as compared to the rates applying south of the border in the United States would be about one-third of that incurred by our neighbours.

I am not sure of the actual figures but when I inquired into this question some 15 years ago, this proportion applied. As a basis I took the freight charge from Coutts in Alberta to the lakehead. I believe it was 20 cents a bushel on the Canadian side. The comparable distance in the United States was from Sweet Grass, Montana, to Chicago. The rate there was about 60 cents a bushel. This is, of course, a significant differential, so much so that some enterprising American—I was about to say "Yankee" but I do not think that term is a complimentary one—began to purchase wheat in Sweet Grass, truck it to Coutts, ship by rail to the lakehead and from there to Chicago, making a handsome profit of some 35 to 40 cents a bushel. No doubt it would be interesting to hon. members if I were to relate what happened when the C.P.R. attempted to stop this movement by telling this enterprising individual that no cars could be provided. We often hear this complaint from members of the opposition—that cars are not available.

Mr. Nasserden: A question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. My question of privilege is this: I wish to ask when the hon. member intends to deal with the increase in tolls on the seaway. This ancient history concerning freight rates over the years is very interesting, but all we on this side of the house have been able to gather from it is that the Liberal party has changed a great deal since those days.

• (9:40 p.m.)

Mr. Byrne: Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal party changed for the better as time went along and I want to assure the hon. member that the Liberal party has the very highest regard for the western prairie farmer and his problems.

Mr. Baldwin: It is not reciprocated.

Mr. Byrne: If you just look at the MacPherson commission report you will find that the public policy of the Crowsnest rates will continue to apply, as recommended. The hon. member has called this ancient history, but I do not think it is ancient history. I believe it is current history. It is important

that these grain rates stay at a relatively low figure so that we can remain in the world market.

The hon. member raised the question of whether or not I was in order. That question need hardly arise, Mr. Speaker. Your Honour had the pleasure this afternoon of hearing the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) quote extensively from a report by Knowlton Nash, in the May 28 edition of the *Financial Post*, dealing with matters completely extraneous to the question of wheat movement which, after all, is the matter that is before the house, involving an increase in the cost of delivering wheat to Montreal of something like 1½ cents per bushel.

The Leader of the Opposition I submit went much further afield than I have. I am dealing essentially with the question of the rates on grain and whether or not the charges that have been made by members of the opposition, that the Liberal party does not have a policy with respect to freight movement and gives no thought to the western farmers, are correct.

When I was so rudely interrupted—I retract that statement because I have a high regard for the hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden)—when I was so interestingly interrupted I was about to recall that the box car controller in the Canadian Pacific Railway Company at that time told these enterprisers that the company was unable to supply the box cars required for the movement of wheat from Montana to Chicago, but could provide them with cattle cars only. The company did not reckon with the ingenuity of one enterpriser in Montana who took delivery of the cattle cars, simply lined them with three ply, and went on about his business making something like 30 cents a bushel in the transaction.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the motion deals with the question of increased costs of producing and marketing a bushel of wheat. There is no doubt that other commodities will suffer in proportion. I do not have the figures of the proposed increased cost per ton on iron ore. If they are in the same proportion to the cost of moving a ton of wheat, then I hesitate to believe the suggestion that iron ore from Quebec and Labrador will be going over another route to New York and on into the industrial heart of the United States by rail.

There is no question but that the lowest possible shipping costs are obtained by movement on water, even though some lockage charges may be involved. I do not have all of