

Agriculture

resolved. We have the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) staking his position; we have the Minister of State for the Canadian Wheat Board in the other place with another position; we have the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) with a third position.

If that were not enough, we have the hon. minister from western Canada, who knows as much about transportation and freight rates as he knows about humility and women's rights, who also wants to get into the act. Of course, it is little wonder these ministers are confused. After all, Conservative provincial governments in Manitoba and Alberta tell them one thing, farmers' groups tell them another and the CPR, which incidentally contributes \$35,000 to the Liberal party coffers, tells them something else.

The Crow rate is more than just a sacred cow. It is a vital component in a transportation policy which allows us to sell our landlocked grain in the competitive international market. If the Crow rate were abolished and farmers were forced to pay the commercial rate for moving grains, prairie farmers would lose \$320 million per year. In other words, each and every Wheat Board permit book holder would pay an additional \$2,000. When one considers that this extra cost will reduce the farm spending of farmers, it could take almost \$1 billion out of the western Canadian economy.

The Crow rate benefit scheme proposed by some would give carte blanche to the railways to charge higher rates on those branch lines they wish to abandon. Farmers will be forced to abandon branch line elevators and, in turn, the communities which sprung up around them to service the elevators will wither to dust. Our rural way of life will be changed, perhaps beyond recognition.

Of course, any Crow rate benefit scheme would also be open to unwarranted government abuse. Crow benefit cheques would be presented as hand-outs to farmers, just as acreage payments were given prior to elections and then later withdrawn. If the benefit is frozen, farmers could be forced to pick up the tab on all inflationary increases.

Justice Emmett Hall said the following:

There is a school of thought which keeps repeating that, yes we favour the Crow rate, but maybe there is another way of doing it. My frank opinion is that the other way is to load it on the backs of the grain producers.

In 1977 Justice Hall presented the report of his commission to the government. It was well received in the west, but successive governments have ignored this worth-while report. The NDP stands wholeheartedly behind the recommendations of the Hall report.

The CPR simply has not pulled its weight when it comes to hauling grain. Over 14,000 hopper cars have been provided by provincial and federal governments and by farmers' groups. Every year the government pays the railways \$85 million in branch line subsidies and another \$70 million to fix up the branch lines, because the railways have not reinvested branch line subsidies in branch lines.

The statutory Crow rate should be monitored for western farmers. At the same time the railways should be paid directly

for their losses. However, the railways in turn must also pledge to fix up their track, buy more hopper cars and extend Crow related rates to processed goods. Extending the Crow related rates to processed goods would be a positive step in aiding our struggling cattle and hog producers.

Since 1972 the west has lost 40 per cent of its meat packing capacity because of high freight rates for meat. For example, from Saskatoon it costs \$33.80 to ship a 1,000 pound slaughter steer to Montreal, but it costs \$53.04 to ship the same animal processed as meat, hide, tallow and blood. If Crow related rates were established for meat, livestock and other processed goods, western economic development would be encouraged, but not at the expense of our grain farmers as could be the case under other propositions.

While I am on the subject of the problems livestock producers have with freight rates, let me turn to a fair return for producers. This is another area in which the government has failed miserably. Orderly marketing should be a priority for any minister of agriculture. He should be encouraging the establishment of orderly marketing agencies for all farm commodities.

In my riding of Selkirk-Interlake there are cattle producers and hog producers living alongside fishermen. The fishermen in Manitoba's Interlake have experienced the value of a marketing board for their product for over ten years. Through the work of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, fishermen have seen how the unstable, wildly fluctuating price which existed prior to 1969 has been replaced by a stable and fair return that has kept pace with changes in the economic climate. However, livestock producers have not had the same benefits as their neighbours, the fishermen. As many members of the House know, cattle prices are currently about 25 per cent below the cost of production and hog prices are worse.

Earlier in my speech I referred to the bad year experienced by hog and cattle producers in 1980. Their cash receipts were down .8 per cent and .3 per cent respectively. I would like to compare that to the areas where there are marketing boards—dairy and eggs. Manitoba dairy producers increased their cash receipts by 14.8 per cent in 1980 and egg producers increased their cash receipts by 16.8 per cent. While it may not be possible to state categorically that marketing agencies are responsible for all of this difference, there can be no doubt that the boards did provide their members a stable price and stable incomes, not the down-again-up-again incomes of some producers.

Surely the time has come to take effective action permanently to end the boom and bust cycles in our red meat industry. Recently the hon. member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) asked the minister to hold a plebiscite to establish orderly marketing for hogs and cattle. The minister has not responded to that request and we are condemning him today for this lack of action.

However, should the minister have a change of heart, stop talking and start actively promoting the establishment of marketing boards, I suggest on behalf of my party that he consider a marketing board for rapeseed, flax and rye. Without