

Transportation

is surely not fair for the eastern farmers or for the fishermen of the Atlantic provinces, or for the people of British Columbia to be expected to pay higher freight rates in order to maintain the Crowsnest rates for the benefit of western farmers. If the Crowsnest rates do not themselves pay the costs, then the treasury should make up the difference. That is all this bill says—absolutely all it says. It does not say they are not compensatory.

I think that if hon. gentlemen opposite had the faith they pretend to have, they would not be a bit afraid of this review. The only thing one can conclude from their desperate fear of this review is that they do not really believe what they themselves are saying. If they really believed that the railways are now making money moving grain, why are they worried about having the facts made known to the public? There should not be any concern on their part if the rates are compensatory. The only reason for them to be worried would be if they were not—and I do not understand what worry there would be, then, because the legislation practically says that if the rates are not compensatory the treasury should make up the difference. That is all there is to it, and I think it is about time we faced the facts as they are in the legislation. I have tried to be patient about this and I intend to continue being very patient, but it is hard to go on and on hearing members opposite say the direct opposite of what the plain English in this bill is saying.

That is my only reason for interrupting the hon. gentlemen who, I may say, is one of the least offensive members in the whole house, an hon. member for whom I have the greatest esteem; I only wish that in the kind of occupation in which I engage I could do as well as he has done for himself by raising wheat.

Mr. Sherman: The minister spoke of the faith which we on this side of the house may, or may not, have. Would the minister not agree that the frustration we have encountered with respect to some of our investigations in the standing committee would not be calculated to enhance our faith in the legislation?

Mr. Pickersgill: I certainly would not agree with that at all. I think it was the hon. member for Winnipeg South, when he was talking about an effort being made to find out certain information about the rates for the movement of commodities other than grain, and the cost with respect to other commodities, who lit the fuse, which blew about two hours later. I make no complaint about the inquiry in the

committee; I think the hon. members concerned were entirely within their rights. But as to those other rates, there was no suggestion at all that there was to be any payment out of the treasury.

• (8:30 p.m.)

Before the evening is over I will go through the bill and draw attention to every case where costs have to be made public, so the hon. gentlemen will not have to take my word for it; it is right here in the bill. When it is a question of money going out of the public treasury I do not think hon. members should insinuate that we will not have the most thorough scrutiny of the figures. I think I am properly reluctant when I say I do not wish to force the railways to provide us with confidential information, since we are not going to force shipping companies and air lines that may be competing with them to provide the same information. I think it is the desire of hon. members to treat the railways fairly, but I can say that whoever will be sitting on these treasury benches three years hence, if the review should show that the rates are not compensatory, will have to ask parliament to vote money for the railways and ask the taxpayers of Canada to pay that money. Nobody is going to be as anxious as the government to prove that these rates are compensatory.

Surely it must be apparent to all hon. members that we do not want to have to pay anything to the railways, and that we want them to be in a position to earn their own money so that they do not have to come here asking for handouts. I fervently hope that these Crowsnest pass rates are proven to be compensatory. I fervently hope Mr. MacPherson was wrong and Mr. Gobeil was right. But after all, we paid a lot of the taxpayers' money to get this royal commission report and we cannot lightly disregard it. All we are saying is that we are not going to accept the word of the MacPherson commission, and since a doubt has been raised then over a three-year period we will resolve that doubt. If, as the result of a three-year review, it is shown that the rates are compensatory, then no government is going to pay on that basis for another year. The rates are going to be under constant scrutiny. The treasury will be constantly anxious to make the railways more efficient and to make them adopt modern methods of carrying grain so that nothing will have to be paid out of the treasury for the carriage of grain. This will be the real objective.