

Transportation

potash, sulphur and many other products such as forestry products from British Columbia. The minister is working toward meeting a shortfall in our transportation system. Many organizations, such as the various provincial prairie wheat pools, the Western Agricultural Conference, and the Prairie Farm Commodity Coalition, have submitted briefs, made representations and passed resolutions at their annual conventions indicating that it is time the federal government did something. Because the federal government is now showing initiative which is long overdue, it is being criticized. This initiative should have been taken by Conservatives when they were in power, because they knew the needs of the west. They did not do it, and now because the government is doing it they object to the manner in which it is being done. They have said that we are not going about it the right way and that we should have consulted them first. We are going about it in the right way. Rather than criticizing the process, they should get behind it and say, "We will help you make it come to pass". For the benefit of the nation it is necessary to have a guarantee that the transportation will be adequate to carry our exports to the seaboard, so that they can be sent off to our customers. We should lend our support to the Minister of Transport and back him all the way. This is what I propose to do.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): First I should like to congratulate the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of State for Mines (Mrs. Killens) on her elevation to the chair. I should like to deal with the various positions of the Liberal and Conservative parties. For example, as late as February 12, 1982, the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta), was reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press*. It reads:

Murta, who favours changing the Crow rates, said he supports the government's position because the issue has been debated long enough.

The *Calgary Herald* reported the following on February 13, 1982:

The conventional wisdom is that Vegreville MP Don Mazankowski, transport minister at the time, would have proceeded along lines very similar to the course Pepin has struck.

On October 9, 1981, the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board indicated the following:

—because I'm convinced the Crow rate will stay and producers will produce if market returns remain good.

• (1550)

Since then he has made other statements of that kind.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) said "All I can say is that there has to be some other way devised to return the benefits of the Crow rate to grain farmers."

The Conservatives' attempt to confuse the issue probably comes from the fact that they are having a little trouble with the kind of support they should expect on a general basis.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Do you remember the Constitution?

Mr. Hovdebo: The hon. member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) introduced a motion under Standing Order 43 on

February 10. He quoted the premier of Saskatchewan out of context.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

An hon. Member: He wouldn't do that.

Mr. Hovdebo: I would like to quote from the same interview as follows:

It recommended that farmers retain the benefit of the Crow rate. That was the basic recommendation which the government of Saskatchewan fully concurred with—the difference between the compensatory rate and the Crow rate being made up by the government.

As late as November 24, 1981, Mr. Justice Emmett Hall made a statement supporting the Crow rate. I want to read into the record part of that statement:

If once tampering with the statutory rate is accepted or condoned or as an item on the bargaining table, all will be lost. For once the subject is on the bargaining table, it will be only a matter of time until it is lost step by step.

Transportation has always been and will always be an instrument of national policy in Canada. The government of Canada has been making deals in transportation since it first came to power.

In 1881, the federal government needed a national railway. A deal was struck. In 1897, the federal government needed a rail line into the Crow'snest Pass. Again a deal was struck. In 1925, Mackenzie King needed new legislation. The farm labour members from western Canada had seen the exploitation of the farmers by the railways. They insisted on a fixed rate in statute for the producer. Mackenzie King needed the support of the western Progressives. A deal was struck. That deal was the statutory Crow rate.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That is right. That is history.

Mr. Hovdebo: That statute did two things. First, it gave the producers of grain a fixed freight rate with which the railways could not tamper. This was a guaranteed rate. Second, it gave the producers a delivery system. The guaranteed rate was an equal rate for equal distance, a so-called non-variable rate. Equal rate for equal distance guaranteed that we had a system in the west which would work. It was guaranteed that elevators could be built close to farms and the rates to port would be the same for the same distance wherever they were built. The country elevator system was built. The family farms and the rural communities grew up around the country elevators. The family farm and the rural communities gave us the world's most efficient producers of top-quality grain and built a certain quality of life.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): You still see that in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Hovdebo: On Monday, February 8, 1982, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) announced a plan to change the structure under which grain will move. That so-called Pepin plan—

Mr. Rose: That is not a plan.