

Western Grain Transportation Act

Rocky Mountain corridor and on to western ports. He could have encouraged the transfer of rail cars from the southern line into the more northern route and could have allowed for a maximum flow.

As a result of this terrible rainstorm and wash-out, undue hardships were faced by many small businesses and ordinary Canadians. The transportation Administrator would have been able to act swiftly in such a situation and immediately order CNR to allow CPR to use its track so as to keep the vital grain transportation links open and to ensure that prairie farmers would have their grain delivered to West Coast ports. We have had first-hand experience in my constituency with the need for greater regulatory powers. I believe the amendment is a good start, I believe it is a good amendment, and we in the New Democratic Party are pleased to support it.

When we see example after example of the CPR taking a longer route than necessary, we always recognize the inherent danger of leaving private interests such as CPR with the responsibility of furthering the public good. Time after time in industry after industry when there is a conflict between public good and private gain, it is private gain that wins. Private interests are only interested in the public welfare when it fills their own private coffers. It is not necessary to throw aspersions at the private sector. After all, it is the mandate under which it operates. Its major motive is to obtain the maximum amount of profit for its shareholders.

We are talking about an integral transportation system which is necessary to move grain and other commodities from various areas of Canada to its coastal ports. Therefore I believe very strongly that increased regulatory power as proposed in this amendment with the words "promote, and shall require, if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements" is something that we as Members of the House of Commons, with the public good at heart, must support.

As previous speakers have indicated, we must encourage Government Members to give some consideration to this particular amendment. If they are not interested or do not see the wisdom of providing this additional regulatory power to the Grain Transportation Administrator, I ask them to stand in their places and explain to us as Opposition Members and to the people of Canada why this amendment is an inappropriate one, why this amendment is not in the best interests of Canadians, and why this amendment is especially not in the best interests of Canadian grain growers. Hon. Members opposite have a responsibility, particularly those Ministers who are directly responsible to the agricultural sector, to rise and say why the amendment is inappropriate or why it is not in the best interests of Canadian farmers or of the public good.

With those words I will rest my case and look forward to hearing an opposite viewpoint presented by Government Members, if in fact they can establish any logical opposition to this first-class amendment.

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part again in the Crow debate and particularly to address the issue of the amendment before

us, Motion No. 33. As we all know, this is a Conservative amendment but I am pleased to speak on it as a New Democrat.

● (1220)

Our Party is supporting the amendment very strongly. I might note that the NDP have put up 14 speakers on this motion while the Conservatives have only put up ten. The Conservatives should put up three Members for every one of ours. It is we who are really speaking to the motion, fighting for it, asking the Government what is wrong with it and why it is not addressing this issue. We are asking why the Government is not speaking and listening to the voices of reason. We are asking why the Government is not prepared to accept such a sensible amendment.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: It is the old question of quality versus quantity.

Ms. McDonald: The amendment before us is very precise. The clause reads:

The Administrator may—

(d) promote reciprocal and other arrangements between the railway companies to facilitate the efficient and reliable movement of grain for the purpose of maximizing returns to producers.

The significance of this amendment is that we need greater efficiency in the grain handling system. That is something that I am very happy to speak to as a New Democrat. I am concerned about seeing a much more efficient economic system operating. I speak as one who defends the farmer and the producer, wanting to see them get reasonable returns. I am not so concerned about defending the profits of CPR.

In order to improve the efficiency of the grain handling system, we want more interchange between the CP and CN systems, the two major systems in this country. They must work together if our farmers are to be well served. The railways must work together on shorter hauls. It is extremely appalling to me as an environmentalist, as somebody who is very much committed to energy conservation, to see the enormous waste in the transportation system. It is not only the rail system which is extremely wasteful in this way: we also see this in other modes of transportation, such as ships and planes. There is no excuse for not having greater efficiency in the rail system.

We have to be very careful of our resources. We must use them wisely. We are dealing with non-renewable resources which were given to us through no credit of our own. We are using them very rapidly. We should use as little as possible. This means using our transportation system in the most efficient way possible. Both CP and CN have track that would be better utilized by interconnection with the other system. Unfortunately, it is only in exceptional circumstances that we see these interchanges which promote efficiency and conserve energy. I am sure all Members could cite examples close to their own constituencies about the inefficiencies which occur.

This amendment is a step toward greater efficiency. We of course would like to see a much more comprehensive, inte-