

Western Grain Transportation Act

In considering this question, it should be remembered that there is much talking going on and the Deputy Speaker himself takes considerable time in giving a ruling. This should certainly not be used as a denial of Members' opportunities to deal with and debate the Bill before the House.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, my next point of order is, what will happen in the meantime? You have already ruled on the time of 12.24. There is to be one more 20-minute speech before going to ten-minute speeches. Let us say that later this day or some other day the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and I raise a point of order and it is decided and agreed that time taken up by points of order is not counted in the eight-hour debate time. What would you do then, Mr. Speaker? Would you revert to 20-minute speeches when some Members have already been limited to ten minutes? It seems to me that the situation will only get worse.

I submit, Mr. Speaker, that if this ruling is to stand, then any Party could decide to raise all the points of order it wishes about what some Member happens to be wearing, or whether the clocks are correct, or a host of other subjects in order to prevent the full eight hours of debate.

Mr. Smith: We would not do that.

Mr. Benjamin: Oh no? Surely, Mr. Speaker, with all the prerogatives the Chair has, if very many deliberately minor, inconsequential and time-consuming points of order are raised, the Chair may always cut them off very quickly. But it seems to me that all points of order raised so far having to do with these rules and the context of this debate have been legitimate points and there have been contributions made from all sides. Surely those contributions are not part of a debate about western transportation and the statutory grain rates.

It seems to me that nobody can claim that the points of order raised to this time have been malicious or frivolous or anything like that. But if it is concluded or decided that this time will be counted in the eight hours, I predict that decision will cause great difficulties in the future because particularly the Government Party could completely hamstring much of the Opposition's time by dealing with points of order on any darned thing it pleased that would have nothing to do with the Bill before the House.

Mr. Smith: We have never done that.

Mr. Benjamin: But the opportunity is there for any Party to do that. The opportunity is there for individual Members to do that. Surely that cannot be allowed to stand, Mr. Speaker. The time cannot be included in the eight hours of debate.

● (1240)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I must say I am surprised that the Hon. Member for Regina West even considers the possibility that I might have made an erroneous ruling! I hope that he and other Members regard all my rulings as little gems, but obviously I am not going to have that support today.

I have said, and this will be for the fourth time, that in view of the words used by my predecessor in the Chair, if Hon. Members would like to take the time to check those words, the opportunity for consideration can arise again tomorrow.

The Hon. Member raised a hypothetical problem about whether we might have to reverse my ruling. I can assure him, sitting where I do in the boar's nest, that I am confident of my ruling and that he will be satisfied by tomorrow. We will see whether it is appropriate to have that ruling again at 11 a.m. or 3 p.m., depending upon whether Hon. Members want to pursue the point. If Hon. Members do pursue the point, they will find that the Chair is correct.

Now may I recognize the Hon. Member for Dauphin-Swan River (Mr. Lewycky).

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, as a final point of order, I suggest that the next three speakers get 20 minutes so that there will be no difficulty later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I can give the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) the absolute assurance that only one Member will be recognized for 20 minutes and then there will be a ten-minute question and answer period. I made that ruling prior to 12.24 and I intend to honour it.

Mr. Taylor: That is completely unfair.

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to participate in this debate and on the specific amendment made by my colleague. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude also to the Conservative Party for honouring the agreement they made with us on Friday to allow one of their Members to catch a plane and to adjust the order somewhat today.

Much has been said about the history and the philosophy behind the Crow rate. I should like to address the subject from the perspective of some of the producers and the impact that this Pepin proposal will have upon primary producers in areas such as Dauphin-Swan River.

I know that the Crow issue might be a little bit difficult for some Hon. Members opposite to comprehend as they do not have a direct relationship to the people of the land or to some of the individuals who will be affected by the legislation.

If I could use an illustration from the farming area, I know that some of the seed thoughts that I will sow today will be lost because some will fall on rocky soil. As a result, the seed thoughts I am trying to plant regarding the negative implications of the Pepin proposal will be lost because there is no good soil opposite in which they can take root and grow.

On different occasions the Minister who introduced the Bill said that those who opposed his position—in other words, those who favour the retention of the Crow—are reactionaries. This is the word he has used maybe to ridicule some of his own backbenchers who may want to turn an attentive ear to the rational and realistic position that I want to put before the Minister.