

Western Grain Transportation Act

recommendations. This meant a secondary industry could grow in the West, that once again our packing plants could become modern, our feeding systems could integrate with packing plants and we could move ahead and add to our secondary structure and strata on top of our primary agriculture in western Canada. This meant producers in western Canada would have a wider market. They would have more freedom and potentially more diversification. It meant that most industries could stabilize and rationalize and that something would happen down the road, that change would come in. We would break out of old habits and old chains and could start to utilize all that tremendous strength and wealth that we keep talking about here but do nothing about.

Then we had rumour of trouble with the Quebec caucus, trouble in Cabinet and trouble with the Quebec Ministers. They felt that payment to the producers was a threat to emerging and growing agriculture in the Province of Quebec. I have looked into that. I am told that there is no threat. I understand the Government has charts and graphs it is trying to show to the Quebec agricultural industry to prove it has a false attitude toward change. We have also had word that the Pools were against payment to the farmers and they want payment to the railroads. Frankly, I do not understand that. I think the bureaucracy of the Pools and the elected board of directors of the Pools are really not acting in the best interests of their producer members.

● (1130)

I was amazed to learn that both Quebec politics and the politics of the Pools favoured payments to the railroads. Then the Minister of Transport, who had gained and earned a measure of trust in the West, immediately reversed, almost 180 degrees, the pattern and plan of the Bill he was to bring in. He rushed the Bill in and there were not enough copies for interested Members. New Democratic Party Members and Members of my Party were trying to obtain more copies to distribute to very interested people in the Prairies. There were only 651 minutes of debate, in the Government's words, on the third major Bill in this session, and the Minister of Agriculture was up on his feet limiting us to ten-minute speeches on something which touched every one of us in Canada. There is something very, very wrong.

Mr. Pinard: That is not true.

Mr. Huntington: He has given notice of closure.

Mr. Pinard: Ten-minute speeches are under the rules.

Mr. Huntington: Yes, ten-minute speeches are under the rules, but it is difficult to touch anything of this magnitude in ten minutes; one could barely clear one's throat on something as important as this. If the President of the Privy Council were acting properly, he would negotiate with the Leaders on the other side to suspend the rules with unanimous consent so that we could have 20-minute speeches, debate and questions. Then we could open up all the matters which are not understood, such as how the Bill will touch each and every one of us involved in the food chain across the land.

The Bill is a national issue. It is not only a western farmer and grain producer issue; it is not only a western cattleman's issue. It is not just the hog producer of Quebec who is involved. Every activity in the Canadian food chain will be affected by what we do with this Bill. The Government has a fundamental opportunity within the palms of its hands to put something in which will create not an industrial strategy but an industrial environment in Canada if the correct decisions are made on the principle of the Bill.

I am against the principle of this Bill because it has not used the House and its powers to discuss and debate it. There are various matters involved which are contrary to the health and wellbeing of the future of the nation. I see Mr. Speaker indicating that I am out of time. I am against the principle of this Bill. I urge the Minister to withdraw it, redraft it and put its subject matter into committee so that we can return with something that is meaningful and good for the country.

Mr. Doug Anguish (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, in the brief ten minutes which I have today, as the previous Hon. Member just mentioned, there is hardly time to go into the depth and complexities of Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof.

The Bill is really an omnibus piece of legislation. It deals with the rail transportation system, with very rich western coal lands and with the statutory rate for the movement of grain. Although people may say that some of the leadership of prairie farm organizations do not represent grassroot farmers at the local producing level, I think farmers are saying clearly that they do not want the statutory Crow rate changed. It is one of the few subsidies western farmers are receiving.

With it being removed or increased to the magnitude of the plan of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) in Bill C-155, we are looking at about \$1 billion being lost by prairie farmers. In terms of the prairie economy, it is much more than \$1 billion. If we listen to agricultural economists, they will tell us that an agricultural dollar has a multiplier effect of anywhere from four to seven times. We could be dealing with as much as \$7 billion out of the Canadian economy by the year 1990. A very heavy portion of that will be placed on the backs of western grain farmers. Although we in the New Democratic Party agree that there is a need to upgrade the Canadian rail transportation system and badly want jobs to put more Canadians back to work, we do not feel that the entire cost should be placed on the backs of western Canadian farmers.

Grain producers contribute some \$6 billion to the balance of trade. Approximately 20 per cent of all wealth in Canada is derived from agriculture. If we want to upgrade the transportation system, it should be done with the participation of the entire Canadian economy, not just a few agricultural producers and farmers in western Canada.

I will not go into the history of the Crow rate because of the brief time I have. Back on February 17, 1982 I talked at length about the Crow rate under the borrowing authority. I referred to its history and importance to western Canadian