

Western Grain Transportation Act

we identify ourselves in Western Canada. So I point out these instances. They may seem small and they may seem insignificant, but it all goes toward creating some goodwill.

We all have shipped commodities on the railways and we all know that we have had bad service in the past. I am sure the Hon. Member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) can cite many instances of cattle being ready to be loaded at the little stockyards alongside the railway and for some reason the train being late or the train having gone by without sending off cars and no explanation being given. It is very frustrating for an individual out in the middle of the Prairies to be treated without what might appear to be only common courtesy. Now, there may be an explanation for it and it may be a proper explanation, but those are the kinds of things many people remember as far as the railways are concerned.

The Minister spoke about some of the guarantees in this Bill that will require the railways to maintain a certain standard of performance. I point out to the Minister that in the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1970, there already is a provision that would require the railroads to maintain service. The provision is on page 6438, Section 262, and I will read part of it to point out what is already in statute form and why we are suspicious when there are to be some guarantees of performance and some penalties for non-performance in the present Bill. Section 262 reads:

The company shall, according to its powers,

(a) furnish, at the place of starting, and at the junction of the railway with other railways, and at all stopping places established for such purpose, adequate and suitable accommodation for the receiving and loading of all traffic offered for carriage upon the railways;

(b) furnish adequate and suitable accommodation—

(c) without delay, and with due care and diligence, receive, carry and deliver all such traffic;

(d) furnish and use all proper appliances—

(e) furnish such other service incidental to transportation as is customary—

I left out a great deal of it, but I point out that there are already statutes in place that require the railways to maintain service, and yet we all know of cases where that has not happened. So we view with a certain amount of suspicion any new provisions, however well intentioned the Minister and his Department may be, that will require the railways to maintain and provide adequate performance because we know from the past that that has not necessarily been the case.

We also know that there are cases, and I can give you an example right now, of the railways, because of their monopoly position, not being competitive. We talk about the trucking industry and what is going on with trucks. In my area, fertilizer dealers are moving fertilizer by trucks this Spring because they are saving \$20 a tonne over what the cost would be on the railways. So we know that we must somehow force the railways to be competitive, otherwise their costs become prohibitive. When we see that the way that is to be accomplished in the present Bill is through regulation and more bureaucracy, we become very suspicious of it because, to my mind, the real way to regulate and control them is to force the railways to compete. I am not so sure that this Bill will do that.

One of the things that I find exciting is the Hon. Member for Vegreville's suggestion that producers be given the option of either receiving the benefit themselves or having that benefit go to the railways. To my mind, that would go a long way toward making the railways competitive. I would urge the Minister to take a very serious look at that suggestion, and I would hope that he would be amenable to amendments that would bring that kind of thing about when the Bill gets to committee.

There are many other concerns that I have about the Bill. One of the things that concerns me is the bureaucracy involved, and really the possibility exists in this legislation of having the Department of Transport take over the grain transportation industry in western Canada. The Minister shakes his head, but I would point out to him that Section 33 Subsection (3) of the Bill reads:

Notwithstanding anything in this or any other Act of Parliament, the Governor in Council may, by regulation, transfer the administration and control of any railway cars held by the Canadian Wheat Board on behalf of the Government of Canada from that Board to the Minister.

Now, I am not so sure that that is a good idea. Those of us from western Canada are concerned about Ottawa and about what we call eastern Canada running us. I would like to suggest to the Minister that if he is to do that kind of thing, he should make the CTC in Saskatoon more powerful. Let him put some of the bureaucrats who are in charge of western grain transportation in Russell, in Yorkton, in Davidson, in Red Deer or in some of those smaller towns in western Canada where they will be very close to the people who are affected by the rulings that they make. We might then get some bureaucrats who are more responsive.

To set up a situation where there is to be more and more power given to the Minister and his Department and have that Department located a long way away from where their decisions will have effect leaves them open to more than just the possibility that producers will suspect that they are not getting good representation and good decisions. I would not like to see that kind of thing happen.

To go back and indicate to the Minister that I have been consistent in some of the concerns that I have had, I feel that even the Gilson task force should have been more open and it should have been more reflective of producers' concerns. I would not have seen anything wrong, for instance, in having the Gilson process take place in Saskatoon or in a town like Davidson where the task force would have been very close to the land and to the producers who will be affected by the decisions that are made.

Let me outline and amplify on some of the other broad areas of concern that I have about this Bill that I have touched on. First, we would like to know about the safety net. We would like to know how it will be enforced, how the figures will be determined, and what the percentage is to be, is the percentage to be on the price of grain at export position or is it to be on the net price that the producer receives at the elevator? To pick the figure that I have heard, if it is to be 10 per cent of