

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

paying more because of his initial costs in taking that grain to the railhead.

My concern for all of those cost factors becomes very dramatic when I consider a new era with new land and the high costs already facing farmers. They now have an added expense which is brought forward in Bill C-155. I believe it will make all the hard work and investment by the people in the Peace country less worth while and make that pioneering spirit that we have needed in many of our new areas less attractive and less worth pursuing. The consequences will not only be an effect on the agricultural economy of the Peace country but in fact a very dramatic and serious effect on our whole economy, since everything is so closely related.

The Government has told us that diversification is a primary goal of changes to the Crow rate. That is important. While that is very important to the people in the Peace country, all of the diversification in the world will not induce our farmers to produce goods that they cannot afford to ship. There is no flexibility provided for in the present situation. The Crow benefit should be applied in such a way as to encourage our farmers to make on new products, use their land in different ways and provide a better farming base for them. I do not see that in this particular legislation because there is no flexibility.

I believe that Canada as a whole benefits from the production and shipment of grain. I suggest that we are all aware of the fact when we look at the country. We all realize that since Canada benefits from the agricultural community, which is certainly true of the Peace country, we have supported that industry in order to allow it to compete, become strong and develop new lands. That is now suddenly coming to an end. We do not have a river system such as the Mississippi to ship our grain. We have to cross mountains and prairies in order to reach both export and domestic markets.

The Government has indicated time and again that it wants to support Canadian industry. I believe very strongly that if we are to support Canadian industry we have to support the farm community.

In closing, I want to say that I do not support this particular Bill because I do not think it helps the farmers of the Peace country, and I do not see it benefiting them in the difficulties they face today, or in the future.

**Mr. Ron Stewart (Simcoe South):** Mr. Speaker, as an Ontario Member and not as a westerner, I rise to speak against this Bill, unfortunately only for a short ten minutes. This Bill, which would change the traditional Crow rate after being in place some 86 years, will fundamentally change the whole transportation system of Canada. If the change remotely parallels the Post Office, CNR, the CBC, the National Energy Program or Canadair, I would ask Members to consider the devastating results for all Canadians. No one trusts this Government with its sticky fingers on anything, let alone the national transportation system of this great nation.

• (1140)

Every Province and every industry in Canada, not just the West by any means—and I reiterate I am an Ontario Member—will be damaged by this change, particularly the total agricultural community; and unfortunately, the extent of this damage and its total effect is an unknown quantity.

**Mr. Pepin:** Jim Snow will be angry at you.

**Mr. Stewart:** Why? Because this Bill is so obtuse, so convoluted, so ill-conceived, so disastrous a bureaucratic nightmare, Mr. Minister, that even the President of CNR whom you represent and two top lawyers admit they do not understand it.

**Mr. Pepin:** I am destroyed by the power of the argument.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** Order, please. I invite the Hon. Member to address his remarks to the Chair.

**Mr. Stewart:** The Minister was heckling, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker.

The Hon. Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) has suddenly become—and he is leaving the Chamber—after such a lacklustre performance with rail curtailment and the VIA debacle, an expert in the field of transportation. This, of course, came after his advice from whom else but his Quebec caucus. Yes, that Minister is an instant expert, Mr. Speaker. We all know the definition of an “expert” in this House: “X” is an unknown quantity and “spurt” is a big drip under pressure.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Stewart:** Mr. X was under enough pressure from his Quebec caucus and colleagues not to come before this House to express his proposed changes to the National Transportation Act. Of course not. Major changes to the fundamental infrastructure of this country, particularly anything to do with western Canada, English-speaking Tory Canada, are done outside the House by this Government using Order in Council and/or closure. At every opportunity this Government bypasses the rights and freedoms of this institution which have been nurtured over tens of years and make us, the elected representatives or voice of the people, absolutely redundant. This is the procedure of this Government. We have seen it for months and years. Do not call witnesses to the committees; do not let Members speak; just bypass, bypass.

The Minister first made his intention to make this change known in Winnipeg on June 28, 1982. This was the birth of the Gilson Report, accepted I might add, which was announced in Winnipeg. Twice more the Minister made statements outside the House and the fifth announcement was made in, of all places, the theatre of the National Press Club. So much for Parliament! This was all done outside these hallowed halls, and I say that advisedly. Five times it was done, twice more than even St. Peter. This was all done out of reach of debate on something of such coast to coast interest and tantamount importance as the complete transportation system, which is the glue upon which this nation was built. This Government has a