

Western Grain Transportation Act

Hnatyshyn). Motion No. 48 would amend Clause 25 which in subclause (1) provides:

A motion filed under section 24 shall be taken up and considered by the Senate or House of Commons, as the case may be, within five sitting days—

Then it goes on to provide that in the generosity of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy) we will be allowed a one-hour debate. Imagine, a one-hour debate on something that might be vitally important to western Canada! That is disgraceful. A one-hour debate with ten-minute speeches means that six Members can speak and that is it. The regulations may be vitally important to western Canada. For reasons that are obvious, therefore, I want to support Motion No. 48 moved by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) who proposes a three-day debate.

That is my second choice. My first choice is Motion No. 49 in the name of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) which would not limit the debate at all. As mature Parliamentarians we would be trusted to decide whether there should be a one-day, a three-day, or a ten-day debate. It would be open-ended. I think we have the sensitivity and responsibility to know when enough is enough. I think Parliamentarians must be trusted. This institution should be supreme and we should make the decision.

If Motion No. 49 is not accepted, then obviously as my second choice I prefer Motion No. 48 which would allow at least a three-day debate. I say that because of the importance of the Crow issue and of the transportation of grain in western Canada.

I find it absolutely despicable that we would only be allowed a one-hour debate on regulations that could be so vital to rail lines all across the country and to the movement of grain across the country in what is really the most important industry in Canada. If we do not have a healthy grain farming economy, that will affect jobs in Ottawa West, Montreal, in Toronto and all across the country. We should have a bit more democracy in this place and a bit more leniency so that we can speak on behalf of our constituents.

I want to make the argument for my urban friends across the way once again, Mr. Speaker. It is not right, nor is it fair, that we have this severe limitation on debate where it would take 30 Members of Parliament to petition that a certain regulation be referred to a committee of the House or 15 Senators to petition that a certain regulation be sent to a special Senate committee. That is not fair because of the discretionary power given to the Minister of Transport.

Even if the present Minister of Transport were to be fully trusted, if he were fully sensitive to the needs of western Canada—the Minister is not but even if he were—who will be the next Minister of Transport?

Mr. Blenkarn: Certainly not that one.

Mr. Nystrom: It could be the Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn), for example, though God help us. It might be someone who would do things totally against the interests of western Canada. He could be from any Party, Mr.

Speaker. In almost any Government there could be someone who blows the job, who is a dud. And what recourse do we have? We have a one-hour debate.

• (1150)

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, as the fairminded arbitrator you are in this House, that if you were not in the Chair you would be standing on the other side of the House screaming about the unfairness, injustice and lack of democracy which we have in Clauses Nos. 22 and 25 of the legislation which is before this House. I know that many Liberal Party Members, if they were not afraid of the immense power of the Office of the Prime Minister, would be standing as well and expressing their grave concern about this severe limitation which we have had imposed—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak this morning to Motions Nos. 47, 48 and 49. You will be very pleased to know that I intend to keep strictly germane to the topic and not wander about. By speaking to this group of motions, Mr. Speaker, I would also like once again to register my opposition to Bill C-155, the Government's plan to kill the Crow rate. The amendments before us this morning, like all of the other amendments before this House, are very important. As I see it, the intention behind each of these amendments—two of them moved by this Party and one by the Conservative Party—is to protect the authority of Parliament in the face of a growing trend to govern by Order in Council.

It is a laudable provision contained within this Bill to give Members of Parliament, and even Senators, the ability to examine the regulations put forward by the Grain Transportation Administrator and to revoke those regulations if they are not appropriate. Motions Nos. 47, 48 and 49 only serve to make those provisions much more workable and, I believe, much more fair than what is now proposed.

Motion No. 47 seeks to limit to only 15 the number of Members of Parliament who must give written notice for a regulation to be referred to committee. The same number is required for Senators. As it now stands, 15 Senators or 30 Members of Parliament can give written notice to have a regulation initiated by the Administrator of the Senior Grain Transportation Committee examined by a committee. Why is that? I can understand why we should not try to double the number of Senators required to give notice to 30, the number now required for Hon. Members of this House. If it were not a Wednesday when the pay cheques are handed out, it might be very difficult to find even 15 Senators, let alone 30, who know anything about grain transportation, or who even care. However, setting that logistical problem aside for the moment, I must say that I cannot understand why this Bill would give to a Chamber filled, as my friend, the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), pointed out, with political appointees, what amounts to twice the opportunity to have