

Western Grain Transportation Act

ing companies in Saskatchewan. To me, this indicates that CN and CP, in hauling by truck, will not provide an especially efficient system for the producers. They will probably supply much of the same darned thing that we have right now, with the two rail companies having a monopoly and providing considerably less than satisfactory service to the producers on the Prairies.

● (1730)

In the debate a few days ago on Motion No. 34, we heard the Hon. Member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) complaining that many farmers had no choice but to ship by truck because there were no branch lines in their areas, much the same as had been said by others. What I found to be contradictory in his comment was that he was supporting a resolution, indeed Clause 17(4), a clause which will lead to more abandonment of rail lines on the Prairies and to more cases such as those he was lamenting in his speech a few days ago.

Protecting the branch lines has really become a matter of life and death for many prairie communities. I do not really exaggerate when I say "life and death", because for many communities the railway is really their *raison d'être*. Without the rail lines in their area, the elevator goes. Your Honour might have visited smaller prairie towns. Indeed, I could take you into a number of communities in my constituency where the entire focus of the town is the grain elevator. If the rail line goes, the grain elevator goes. If, instead of hauling his grain into Fisher branch, a farmer starts taking it by truck into Ashern or Arborg, more likely Arborg, he will stop there to buy his parts and fertilizer. Indeed, he will do his grocery shopping and make his clothing purchases in a different town. That will affect the businesses already in place in the town to which he previously delivered, perhaps Fisher branch in this scenario. The Government wants to thin down the small businesses in these small towns on the Prairies.

It is equally surprising that my friends to the extreme right who claim to be such good friends of small business show such a lack of concern for small businesses in so many small towns in prairie Canada. It really goes beyond small businesses. Once the businesses die and the people decide to move on to other communities, the services go. Last fall, the Canadian Transport Commission held hearing in Fisher branch, in my constituency, on the subject of abandoning the Inwood subdivision. A number of groups, including students from the high school, made presentations to the CTC, really arguing this same point, that without their rail line their community would go. The high school students made a very good presentation, very well thought out and presented, expressing their fear that abandoning the rail line could eventually lead to the closure of their school. This, I am sure Your Honour will agree, would be a very harmful and sad event to happen in any small community. So when I say that it is a life and death struggle for many of these towns, I really do not think that I am overstating the situation.

When Hon. Members speak of a more efficient system of transporting grain such as hauling grain by truck, they are not

really considering the whole scenario or the additional costs to the local areas. For instance, the cost to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair hesitates to interrupt the Hon. Member, but the time allocated to him has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There does not appear to be unanimous consent.

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on Motion No. 35. I hear my friends—I use that word in the meaning that we give to it in the House—from the NDP speaking of inconsistencies. I just want to draw the attention of the Chair to the inconsistencies that I see. First, there is the view that trucking is hard on the highways, as I have heard from Members of the NDP. I have heard that the big trucks rolling over the highways will destroy the roads. One of the Members of that Party even mentioned that the former Premier of a certain Province had done such a terrible job that there are many gravel roads left. However, we all know, and we now see that the NDP is recognizing this, that if one is hauling grain on a single-axle three-ton truck, one is going down the road with six tires under the truck, or if one is hauling grain on a straight tandem, one has ten tires on the road, or if one is hauling it on a semi, one has eighteen tires on the road. It does not take much sense to figure out, in the same way as does any department of highways in any Province in Canada, that that is why loads of more poundage are allowed on tandems and on semis than on single-axle trucks or, indeed, a three-ton with dual wheels.

Speaking of inconsistencies, it is strange what I heard in this House the other day, that trucks would destroy the roads, trucks would destroy the community and trucks would add an additional burden to the municipalities. It is now apparent that Members of the NDP, with their amendment, have realized that it makes for more efficiency and for more sense to have an organized movement of grain through using larger trucks than most farmers, in my area anyway, have the ability to purchase.

We heard the last Hon. Member speaking of the big companies that would haul the grain. I am not sure, with the amendment put forth by the NDP, who will haul the grain. I am not sure, and I hope someone can tell me, if there is to be an off-line elevator concept with this motion, or are the lines to be completely abandoned and, along with that, the elevators abandoned and, the farmers hauling their own grain through an arrangement with the Administrator, when the NDP said he should not have such authority? Or will there be elevators maintained in an off-line concept? There would be duplication in that case. There would be a handle when the grain came in, a handle when it went out and a handle when it was unloaded at the other end. We do not know the exact meaning of this amendment.