

Western Grain Transportation Act

tees. It is in that sense that I invite the Hon. Member to come to the point.

Mr. Mayer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly take your admonition although I somewhat regret that you used the word "attempt". By that, I take it that I have not totally convinced you. At any rate, I thank you very much for your guidance.

Let me simply refer specifically to the amendment. It would remove paragraph (d) of Clause 17 on page 8 of the Bill and would simply substitute the following words: "promote, and shall require," which is compulsory, but, "if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements" as far as the railways are concerned. I think that is entirely in order.

There is nothing totally compelling about it. It does not say that the Administrator shall, under all circumstances and under any conceivable condition, require the railroads to reciprocate as far as running rights are concerned. It simply reads to "promote", and that entails a whole range of things.

It goes on to read, "and shall require", and I think the key words are "if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements". I see that as being entirely consistent with what the Bill should do. As I said, the Bill should promote efficiencies within the system, keep costs down to the producer and also hopefully save the taxpayers money, because this is an entirely regulated system.

I am not accusing the railways of being devious or anything else, but if the regulations are set up so that the railways can run circuitous routes, that may in fact be exactly what the railways will do. If there are ways for the railways to take less than direct routes and keep their costs higher than would normally be the case if there were reciprocal arrangements, I think there is nothing wrong with the Administrator being in the position to enforce that kind of reciprocal arrangement. That is exactly what this amendment attempts to do.

I really do not understand why the Government should be so concerned about this amendment. As I said, the motion reads: "promote, and shall require," and the key words are "if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements". Then it goes on. I do not see anything that is inconsistent with the free enterprise system and I do not see anything that would indicate that this Party is being inconsistent. In fact, the whole Bill is totally regulatory.

One of the things that we on this side attempted at committee was to get rid of some of these arrangements that were totally regulatory in order to free up the system and allow truckers and the individual producer to have a part to play. The Government turned that down so we are now saying that we should at least give the Administrator some powers to force the railways to be efficient.

The Parliamentary Secretary says that he does not understand this. I can understand that. He finds it difficult to understand because he lives in High Park. He has made a big deal about being born in either Wakaw or Cudworth in Saskatchewan. I cannot remember which town, but I am familiar with that area.

Mr. Flis: Try Wadena.

Mr. Mayer: Excuse me, Wadena. That is the same general area of Saskatchewan. I can understand that he does not understand it because he did not grow up in that part of the country. He does not understand the railways. He did not have a chance to deliver grain and load cars through elevators. When he says he does not understand, I would suspect it is because he does not have an understanding of the way the railways work.

When talking about this amendment, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about why the railways should not have to be subject to some of the powers of the Administrator. The reasoning is that the railways need to make money because the railways will turn around and invest that money. We know very well that that is not the case because officials of the railways told us in committee that there was no guarantee that this money would go to specific investments. They told us that the money would go into general revenues. In fact, I think officials of one or both of the railways issued press releases last spring indicating that their intention to invest money would not now come about because of the downturn in traffic. They were not planning on investing as much money this current year as had originally been intended.

The railways are going to make a lot of money as a result of this Bill which is so generous to them, but there is no guarantee that their officials will take that money and invest it in the way that we need it to be invested. The railways have good intentions and we know that, but there is no iron-clad guarantee. We are attempting to give the Administrator some teeth so that he may do what he thinks is right in terms of holding down the costs to the producers and in the process hold down some of the costs to the public treasury.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, what is really at issue in this amendment, which we certainly intend to support, is why the railroads should give up a long trip for a short trip. Certainly the experience in Prince Rupert over the years has been that where and when possible the railways have been somewhat reticent to provide the required number of cars to the existing grain elevators in Prince Rupert. One of the largest and most efficient grain elevators, not only in Canada but in the world, is now being constructed and it is certainly our expectation that, because of the Crow Bill as it now reads, there is a possibility, if not a probability, that there will be shortages in the supply of grain to the Port of Prince Rupert.

The Parliamentary Secretary has said that the amendment contravenes the powers of the CTC and the Railway Act. I do not believe the Government has taken care to analyse and evaluate what the probability of grain shipments and deliveries will be under the Crow Bill. It is pretty clear that it is in the interest of CN and CP to take their time and to use the longest route possible rather than the shortest. That is clearly how the railways will be making money.

The substantive addition that the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) has suggested is the addition of the word "require", so that the clause would read: