

Western Grain Transportation Act

ment in committee, the amendment that the New Democratic Party would now like to remove. It concerns a subclause of Clause 17.

Mr. Mazankowski: They don't believe in democracy, either.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): The committee decided to accept the amendment because, in its view, it would provide more efficient transportation of grain.

The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-St. James (Mr. Keeper) really said nothing, because I suspect he does not know anything about the Bill. Rather, he filled his speech up with "Mr. Speaker", repeated over and over again. Whenever one hears that, one knows an Hon. Member does not know very much about what he is discussing. Otherwise, he would be able to make a speech without constant reference to Mr. Speaker every second or third word.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: What he said was "Mr. Keeper".

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): I can discount that intervention because it did not have any substance to it whatsoever.

There are areas in western Canada, and we had these kinds of representations before the committee, where at times it is more efficient and cheaper to move grain by truck than by rail. The NDP has constantly harked back to the damage it will do the highways of the various Provinces if the grain is hauled by truck. I have some difficulty accepting that argument because trucks move on the highways all the time, whether they are hauling grain, gravel, fertilizer or any other commodity. The highways, one would assume, are built to a standard that will sustain that kind of traffic. If they are not, then I suggest it is time they were.

An Hon. Member: They are heavily subsidized.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): The various provincial Governments have means at their disposal to raise funds for the construction of highways, and trucks pay a very heavy part of those means of raising funds for the construction and maintenance of highways. I do not believe it is the concern of the Bill or the role of this Parliament to decide how the highways in any particular Province are to be utilized. I think it is the role of the House at this time to deal with the provisions of the Bill. I hope we can go on and do that without, as the Hon. Member for Vegreville has said, the instant experts, suddenly rising to remind us that there is a Speaker in the House by constant reference to him, without there being any substance to their speeches.

I agree with him that the Hon. Member for Regina West spent much time in the committee. In fact, he barely missed a sitting at all. The Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse) spent much time in committee as well and certainly knows the Bill. The same is true of the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo). When those three Hon. Members speak, I assume they have something to say and at least they know what they are talking about.

However, this particular amendment by the Hon. Member for Regina West is, in my opinion, one which will weaken the Bill. I believe the Bill was strengthened in committee with the 89 amendments that were accepted, this particular subclause being one of them. I would certainly hope that the House would now deal with it expeditiously and defeat the amendment so that that subclause will stay in the Bill.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments with respect to this particular amendment presented by the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). I have waited this long to comment on the amendment. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-St. James (Mr. Keeper) has asked where Members of the Conservative Party are with respect to this matter. Quite frankly, I was waiting to see whether or not I would hear an explanation of the purpose of the amendment. I was unable to understand its purpose on the basis of the provisions of the particular subsection of Clause 17 of the Bill, which does provide for the possibility, in the interest of the producer, that provision will be made for the trucking of grain.

I simply want to bring a couple of examples of the availability of such provision, as brought forward by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), in the committee stage, with reference to my own constituency. I know the New Democratic Party has now trained its guns on the Conservative Party. Its Leader, the Hon. Member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), said that his Party's preoccupation is now to attack the Conservative Party. That was his objective at the beginning of this sitting of the session.

I want to tell the NDP that that has never succeeded in the past as a way by which to accomplish what must be done for western Canadians. The people of western Canada are fed up with the kind of attitude that has been taken by the Leader of the NDP, of cosying up to the Government on every occasion, supporting it whenever it comes close to a confidence vote, and attacking the Official Opposition, the Conservative Party. The people of western Canada do not understand that. What they do understand is circumstances such as those in my own constituency.

In the Asquith subdivision, there was a very serious situation over the course of the last year, one in which we came very close to violence. I called upon the former Minister of Transport to have a meeting with representatives in my constituency regarding rail line abandonment. The Minister would not meet with my constituents and the order proceeded for the removal of the branch line. The results are now being manifested in the village of Arelee, which has now lost its village status. It has turned in its village status because the elevators are gone.

One of the proposals that I wanted to make to the Minister at that time concerned alternatives which should have been considered in terms of keeping the elevators operating in that particular community. One of the possibilities concerned trucking. However, the Minister refused to meet. He was insensitive to the needs of people in that very important area, one which is growing in terms of production of grain and population, but which is now faced with the situation where