

Mr. Blais: Grains.

• (1230)

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): For grains. It was not a flexible rate; it did not have any elasticity in it. There could not be any rubber rule involved. We used to have a surveyor whom we called "Rubber Rule Rabinzky." He would produce a survey which would fit any dimension at any time. He could do it within five minutes.

An Hon. Member: He must have been a Liberal.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I do not know what he was but he certainly had elasticity. As the Crow rate currently exists, there is no elasticity. That high input cost of production is fixed. As a result, this fixed cost was translated to have an effect on every other aspect of the cost.

What is the effect of this Bill? It says for the first time that the principle of a statutory freight rate is not to be retained. In other words, there is elasticity and flexibility and all those other variables. While some may say that this situation exists for other businesses, I say that not every business had enshrined in its legislation, for a good quid pro quo, that element of fixed overhead or fixed cost. This cannot be changed overnight. It cannot be changed by saying that it must be done by June 30. Is there anything sacred in change? Is there to be a change for change's sake or is it to take place with understanding? Will it take place as a result of an understanding among those elements of the community that are affected by it?

I suggest to the House that the Minister of Transport has done what no other politician has been able to accomplish. He has united the West with the East. He has united the West and the East with the centre. He has managed to have everyone in the country oppose him. He will be known throughout western Canada, central Canada and eastern Canada as the great unifier; he has everyone against him.

Mr. Thacker: I thought only the Prime Minister could do that.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): We thought that only the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) could do that but he now has a rival.

That is the situation we find ourselves in today as we debate this matter. While the Government may have nothing to lose in the West, the country has a great deal to lose if the Government continues to ignore what is a legitimate regional concern in this country. If anything has been shown as a result of this debate, it has been the demonstration of the failure of the Government to understand Canada and those forces which bring it together and make it work. It has shown its failure to understand the differences so that it can reconcile them. This Bill should go.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with probably the most important Bill we have seen during this session. I say that in spite of the fact that we dealt with the Constitution.

Western Grain Transportation Act

This Bill deals with the production of food and the livelihood of those who work in the fields and raise livestock. Without food we cannot have a country. This Bill is doing more to destroy the hopes, ambitions and aspirations of those who produce food than anything which has been done in Canada in the last 100 years.

Last weekend I was at four meetings with grain growers, hog producers, livestock producers, processors and some consumers. There were over 200 people representing a cross-section of my riding of Bow River and not one person supports Bill C-155 as it exists. I wish the Minister would listen to that. Surely if not one person supports a Bill affecting the producers of western Canada, the Government should stop in its tracks and re-examine it.

It is being supported by the Quebec caucus but this is a western initiative. What has the Quebec caucus got to do with that? Why is it poking its nose into it? This Bill will not even hurt the Quebec farmers in the first place. It might help the Quebec Liberals but it will not help the Quebec farmers.

The Quebec farmers have a hog market now. They have their choice between barley and corn. They need not worry about the hog producers of Alberta and Saskatchewan because there is a potential market there as well which will not interfere with the Quebec market. However this Bill will prevent our farmers from obtaining this market. This Bill will make it impossible for the hog producers and livestock producers of Alberta and Saskatchewan to continue.

I see a Member from the Quebec caucus smiling. Is that your ambition? Do you want to destroy western Canadian agriculture? There must be something the matter with you if you talk like that. You are not talking sense. Why can we not try to build all of Canada instead of trying to destroy a part of Canada?

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

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I am addressing the Chair. I am telling the Member that he has no sense at all when he is trying to destroy one part of Canada. He certainly has no right to smile about it in the House. I say that through you, Mr. Speaker.

Let us deal with the Crow benefit. It was not a transportation issue in the first place. It did not concern subsidies either. It is a rate that was found acceptable when it was put into legislation and it has been acceptable for many years.

It was only in the early 1960s that the contortions became evident. When these contortions began to show up, the Minister outlined them very well and he knows what they are. First, the railway was not getting a fair return on its investment. That was the railway's comment with which many people agreed. As a result of that the railways were not maintaining their lines and carrying out an efficient transportation system. That adversely affected the farmers.

The third contortion arose when it became cheaper for the farmer to ship the raw material from western Canada than to