

Western Grain Transportation Act

To answer the question, let me draw a comparison with Crosby, North Dakota, where it costs \$1.51 Canadian to ship a bushel of wheat. The Minister himself said that the charge will be 70 per cent to 80 per cent of the real cost of the movement of grain in the 1990s. Since it is difficult to equate the cost because of accounting, as the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw said, if we simply take the figures that we have for the United States, where it costs \$1.51 a bushel to ship wheat to Seattle from Crosby, North Dakota, one can see that the farmer would have to pay approximately \$1.11 a bushel in addition to what he is paying now. I can state to the Hon. Minister that every farmer in western Canada would be bankrupt with costs like that.

Certainly there might be some consideration for an increase in cost if the ability to pay was there. But the ability is not there.

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Hon. Member which is not hypothetical, because I think we should be dealing with facts in regard to the Crow. The Hon. Member mentioned the heavy tax burden placed upon the farmers by the Liberal Government. He gave some figures as to the amount of tax. Could he inform the House how much of that is federal tax? I know that the Conservative Government in Saskatchewan lowered taxes in order to help the farmer and the economy in that Province. It was a great boost.

What seems to be hampering farmers and economies in the West is these heavy Liberal energy taxes that have been brought on by the disastrous National Energy Program, which lost some 60,000 jobs in the industries in Ontario and Quebec, drove oil rigs out of the country, and indeed untold millions of dollars were driven out as a result of that program.

If the Liberal Government were to consider some of the policies that have been implemented by the Saskatchewan Government, does he think it would be of assistance to the farmer?

Mr. Gustafson: Just to clarify this difficult situation, there is no provincial sales tax in the Province of Saskatchewan on farm fuel. There is, however, a federal tax of 66 cents per gallon and the removal of that tax would certainly be productive. That is the point I was making.

Many of the Government's actions in the past have been counterproductive. Take metrication, for example. One can ask how that is counterproductive. The farmer can no longer clearly read instructions on how to mix chemicals. There is the fuel tax under the national energy policy. We now have another blow, Bill C-155.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. There has been a tendency in some parts of the country to view this Bill as probably only affecting western Canada. I do not represent a constituency in western Canada as the Hon. Member does. Could the Hon. Member enlighten me and other Members from other parts of the country on the effect this can have beyond what is considered

western Canada and the area which is considered to be affected alone? Is this a Bill that affects the country as a whole and, if so, how?

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that there could be a Bill implemented in the House that would have more effect on all of Canada than this one. Consider the impact that agriculture has on the entire country. If the industry becomes non-productive to the point where it cannot buy the necessities needed on farms, such as rubber and steel which go into farm machinery as well as other things that go into agricultural production, it would have an impact upon the factories in Ontario and upon every taxpayer in Canada.

I was considering that point recently. One needs only to consider a country in the world that is held in high regard. When one sees the agricultural community in that country and the policies that have built and strengthened the agricultural community, one can see a strong country.

At one time in North America, both in the United States and Canada, 97 per cent of the population was engaged in agriculture. Today, 4.5 per cent produce enough food in North America to feed North America and a great portion of the world. I want to say that this is a credit to North America and also a credit to Canada.

● (1540)

Mr. McKenzie: Mr. Speaker, I have one final question for the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), who explained the serious problems farmers are having in western Canada, and we know of the burden placed upon them by the National Energy Program. The Hon. Member also mentioned the metrication program. If that program were repealed, would this assist the western farmers?

Mr. Gustafson: Mr. Speaker, that would assist all Canada. First, it would probably save the country a lot of money. Second, we have farmers who do not know what they are doing in terms of measurement when it comes to spraying this spring. This point was brought forward very capably by the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw last evening. He pointed out the importance of it. In addition, there are so many areas where metrication has had devastating effects. I am sure farmers would be much encouraged if that program were reversed.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Before recognizing the Hon. Member for Verchères (Mr. Loiselle) who is to take part in the debate—

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[English]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-35, an Act to incorporate the Eparchy of the Eparchy of Saints