

Mr. de Jong: I also invite some Government Members to stand up and give some rational reasons and arguments why we should not pass this amendment. Surely this is a debating forum. For Government Members to say nothing and to sit quietly and vote like a bunch of robots is a travesty of the purpose of this House and our parliamentary tradition. Surely, Mr. Speaker, they have some obligation.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Hon. Member, who does not know very much about this Bill obviously, is now taking it upon himself to reflect upon the motives of other Members in this House. That is surely not part of the rules of debate in this House.

Mr. Benjamin: Don't be so touchy, Maurice.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, I certainly was not referring to the Hon. Member. The Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) has given his thoughts and opinions on this amendment, and I congratulate him for that. I certainly do not want to imply that he has wrong motives, certainly not that Member. But I do invite some of the other Government Members who will be voting on this amendment to stand up and explain to this House and to Canadians why they will vote that way. Surely this amendment is a rational one; it requires rational debate. The least we can expect from Government Members are some rational reasons why we should be opposing this amendment. Silence is not debate. Silence is not rational argument. Government Members owe it to the public of Canada to give something more than silence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1210)

Mr. Blais: Mr. Speaker, I rise simply to point out that in all the blathering from the Hon. Member who just took his seat, he did not discuss the merits of the particular amendment either.

Mr. Benjamin: You just came in. Where have you been?

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I hope we will not indulge in that kind of bootlegging of comments on other Members' speeches. That is deliberate debate. If the Hon. Minister wishes to make a contribution, he should seek the floor and make one, not rise under the guise of a point of order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Is the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) rising on the same point of order? If so, I must caution him because there is no point of order. Perhaps he is seeking the floor on a different point of order.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, all I wanted to say was exactly what you said, and I will sit down.

Western Grain Transportation Act

Mr. Hnatyshyn: He is a good Minister of National Defence; every time he comes into the House he starts a war!

Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Perhaps you could seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Blais) to share his wisdom on the amendment before us.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. That is not a point of order.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I suspect the Hon. Minister has shared all his thoughts on this Bill with us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blais: That is the best one yet.

Mr. Riis: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words on what I consider to be a first-rate amendment which will enable the Grain Transportation Administrator to do what is necessary in order to obtain the most efficient production from the railway system of Canada. When I see words in an amendment such as "promote, and shall require, if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements", I see the essence of a motive which can only be applauded. If there is anything we can do as a House of Commons in improving this legislation to ensure a more efficient movement of commodities across the country via our rail transportation system, it behooves each Member of the House to stand when possible to speak in favour of such legislation and certainly to support it when it comes time to vote.

I heard Government Members suggest that the existing National Transportation Act and the Railway Act were sufficient guarantees to allow the Canadian Transport Commission to enforce regulations to ensure maximum efficiency of Canada's railroads. This is something which must be questioned. This is certainly not the case. At the Crow rate hearings, Justice Emmett Hall indicated that railroads hung on the loaded cars of grain for movement to export position even though movement over another line would cut the distance and therefore decrease the cost to the producer. Justice Emmett Hall understands what is going on with the Canadian railway system. He is well aware of a variety of areas where the system is being abused, and, I want to emphasize, being abused by railway companies to maximize their returns. Nevertheless, this slows the movement of grain to our port facilities.

I had a particular experience in my constituency this past summer which brought the need for this new power to my attention. As a result of a terrible storm in the Rogers Pass area of British Columbia, both the Trans-Canada Highway and the CPR mainline were washed out and the traffic over the CPR mainline was disrupted for many days. Had the transportation czar in Canada had the authority and power to do so, he could have stepped in very quickly and enabled CPR to take advantage of the CNR line which also runs through the