

not want to engage in debate with Hon. Members, but it seems to me that we sometimes wander very far afield. I do not criticize or question in any way the validity of the arguments being made. I would simply ask Hon. Members to try to relate more clearly and specifically to the amendments. I give the Hon. Member the benefit of the doubt.

**Ms. McDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In any event, I had only one further sentence to quote which I think will help to make very, very clear the relationship my remarks have to the amendment. I hope the House will be patient. I am a sociologist and I am interested in social systems. I do think we must look at this situation rather more globally. Other Hon. Members have referred to the social impact of the legislation before us and I do not see why I should not be allowed to do so also.

In any event, I wish to quote only one further sentence from *The Leader-Post* article, and it reads as follows:

He said the consolidation was in line with the rationalization of trucking services proposed by the Saskatchewan Highway Traffic Board and the Saskatchewan Transportation Agency. He denied that any of the companies were in financial difficulties.

"It hasn't been done because people are in difficulty. It's a business move. They (CP Trucks) came along and we were agreeable."

This is clearly relevant to the whole question that is before us, Mr. Speaker. Let me return to that question so that there will be no doubt. The subclause that is before us reads as follows:

The Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may enter into agreements to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport where, in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers.

My argument, Mr. Speaker, is that unless we look at the subject globally and see it as an economic system, we may come to the wrong conclusion about what is in the best interests of producers. There are direct costs and there are indirect costs. One of the indirect costs will be increases in taxes to producers to pay for the additional roads that would be required and the additional upkeep of those roads due to additional road traffic. This becomes a direct cost to the producer when he pays his taxes. We should take that cost into consideration; it may seem invisible right now. It is not actually contained in the Bill but it is a cost that will eventually be borne by the producer and it is something that we must look at. In order to have an efficient system, we must look at direct and indirect costs, immediate costs and subsequent costs.

Let us look at a few of the economic facts, Mr. Speaker. I would like to read from the testimony of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) who has obviously been concerned with returns to producers but is also concerned with the efficiency of the whole system. His testimony reads as follows:

Mr. Chairman, further to the reasons for my subamendment, it is an economic fact that when you reduce volumes on a rail line, that increases the costs of the rail line and the losses per bushel on the rail line. So on an existing branch line, the minute you make agreements to provide for movement of grain off that line by motor vehicle transport—

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Motor vehicle transport is clearly the issue that is before us.—you thereby reduce the volume on that rail line, increasing the costs and the losses per bushel on the rail line, which then provides the railroads with the perfect excuse to apply for the abandonment of the line.

This policy will lead to further branch line abandonment and branch line abandonment will lead to higher community costs, higher social costs to families and to small rural communities. The Hon. Member went on to say:

So where lines have already been abandoned—and I think it is about 2,500 miles—it would make some sense for the administrator on behalf of not only the minister but also on behalf of the grain producers to enter into agreements . . . But where there is a branch line in existence, surely we would not want to contribute to the excuse to abandon the thing.

Now, this is being practical and realistic. It is agreeing that there are problems which we cannot turn back the clock to solve. This indicates that we must protect the communities that are currently being served by branch lines. We do not want to see those branch lines abandoned. We would like to see that those communities do have adequate protection and that will not happen unless we remove the subclause that is before us now.

Let me continue by reading some of the economic implications contained in the Hon. Member's argument:

There are extra elevation charges the minute you start hauling grain. It means an extra loading and unloading when you haul grain by truck; it adds an additional loading and unloading. It adds one set of additional elevation charges if you take it from one country elevator to another one on a different line. When the farmer brings it to his country elevator and the truck takes it out to another elevator, it adds an additional loading and unloading of that truck, additional elevation charges and handling charges, compared to what the case would be if the farmer took it to his country elevator and the rail picked it up.

That is the efficient system, the system we have had so far and the system we do not want to see abandoned. The Hon. Member continued:

If you insert an additional movement, that is an additional cost to the grain producer.

We do not want to see additional costs incurred by the grain producer and that is why we see some hypocrisy in the clause that we would like to see deleted when it talks about returns to the grain producers. We wonder what position the grain producers will be in if this provision is allowed to go through.

I shall continue reading the economic argument of the Hon. Member:

If you start moving grain, export grain or non-board grain, off existing branch lines from primary elevators, to a primary elevator on another branch line, as I said earlier, all you have done is reduce the volume of movement on that branch line, increased the costs to the railroad and increased the losses per bushel. So why jeopardize a branch line that is viable? Ones that were considered light grain-dependent lines 10 years ago, with increased production, are now medium to heavy grain lines. Why place them in jeopardy? We are having enough problems keeping the branch lines we have left as it is.

I think we do have to consider the ecological aspects of this policy, Mr. Speaker. If we are to move from rail transportation to trucking, that means that we already have the disruption of the environment created by the rail lines as they exist and there will be additional disruption of the environment and additional use of scarce energy resources. Trucking is certainly a form of transportation that requires extensive use of non-