

Western Grain Transportation Act

Bill C-155 clearly discriminates against these groups by encouraging farmers, through its subsidy structure, to produce grain for the export markets. The biggest loser is the western Canadian agri-business. By paying the Crow benefit to the railways the Government deals a near-death blow to the existing future agricultural processing in western Canada. There are many reasons why this Bill is wrong. It does not provide an enabling device to change the method of payment at some future time.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words on the three motions before the House. Motion No. 52 is in the name of the Hon. Member for Portage La Prairie (Mr. Mayer). Motion No. 53 is in the name of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). I will be very brief on those two. They are calling in the Bill for less confidentiality than the Minister would like. The intent of these motions would be to remove the provision of the legislation that requires members of the Senior Grain Transportation Committee to treat as confidential any information declared to be so by the railways. The reasons for supporting this motion would be that the railways should not have the right to impose secrecy upon the Senior Grain Transportation Committee and hence the population of Canada. I think it is just another argument in a long string of arguments that were started by a Conservative Member, the Hon. Member for Peace River, Mr. Ged Baldwin, many years ago when he talked so long and eloquently about the need for freedom of information in this country. These two amendments, one by our Party and one by the Conservative Party, are going in that direction.

The other amendment before the House is Motion No. 50 in the name of the Hon. Member for Regina West. This would require that the railways invest in each of the subsequent years at least as much money in upgrading the railway system and components of that system as they invested in the past year. The reason for that is that we have often felt in western Canada that we have been short-changed by the CPR and the CNR in terms of the lack of money they have put into the system.

I want to put on the record what I think is one of the real scandals of Canadian Confederation, the history of what I think is one of the biggest welfare bums in this country, the CPR. When I say "welfare bum" I mean welfare bum. We often have complaints about people on welfare because a few extra bucks are given here or there for a few extra services. The biggest welfare bum is the CPR. I want to spend a few minutes telling you why.

In 1917 we had a Royal Commission on Railways and Transportation which said that the CPR in 1917 had received the following public assistance from the taxpayers of Canada: For railway and surveys completed by the federal Government, they received \$37.8 million of taxpayers' money. In direct cash aid, they received \$66.9 million. In the value of unsold land, the CPR received \$119.3 million. Returns from lands sold, minus the cost of improving those lands by the railway company, was \$55.5 million. The total of identifiable aid by the 1917 Royal Commission on Railways and Transportation to

the CPR in 1917 dollars was \$279.5 million. Adjusted to 1982 dollars by 5 per cent for the inflation rate in 1917 and 5 per cent in 1918, and by the average yield on long-term Government securities between 1919 and 1982, the value of that aid would come to \$8.3 billion. That is what was given to the biggest welfare bum in the country in taxpayers hard earned, money.

● (1800)

That is not all. In addition, there have been subsidies to the Canadian Pacific Railway for operating losses on railway services of \$2.9 million in 1982 dollars. I could give all kinds of breakdowns, year by year. The source of my statistics is the annual reports and the books of the CPR.

As of 1981 the Canadian Pacific owed \$1.65 billion in deferred taxes according to its annual report. Adjusted to 1982 dollars that is \$1.83 billion. If the ordinary worker in this country, the ordinary farmer or, indeed, the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) owed deferred taxes, National Revenue would be on his back very quickly to take him to court. But in 1981 the CPR owed \$1.65 billion in taxes. It is the biggest welfare bum in the country yet the Government wants to give it extra handouts of money contributed by the taxpayers in my constituency.

This big welfare bum could not even afford to buy its own railway cars to move its own grain. It could not afford to fix up railway cars or buy hopper cars so it came on bended knee to the federal Government saying to Otto Lang and his boys a few years ago "Buy us some hopper cars". So 7,500 hopper cars were purchased by the federal Government with the hard earned money of taxpayers from places like Kamsack, Yorkton and Melville and so on. At about \$6,500 per car that cost \$490 million.

When you add all the subsidies, the value of land, the value of grants, hopper cars and the improvements in tracks and railways and so on, since the CPR began, in 1982 dollars the value of aid given to the CPR was \$13.5 billion. It is the biggest welfare bum in the history of the country, Mr. Speaker.

Motion No. 50 would go some way toward making sure that it paid its fair share, that it paid for some of the rail line upgrading in the country, that it provided some of its own equipment and did some of its own work instead of coming like a beggar to the people of Canada asking for more and more handouts.

In return, Government after Government has prostituted itself giving handouts without taking any equity. For \$13.5 billion the taxpayers of this country do not have any equity whatsoever in the CPR. I do not know of any Conservative, Liberal or NDP provincial Government that would stand for that kind of handout of the people's money to the CPR with no return. It is another reason why we on this side of the House will not stand by and let the Government impose closure on this Bill.

That \$13.5 billion was given to the CPR in handouts, yet if some poor soul in this country who is on welfare or unemployed