

Transportation

would not be guilty of the type of confused statement he just made.

The debate on the Crow is not just a matter of dollars and cents or a matter of giving in to the promotion and con job of railways over the last 50 years. It is not just a question of trying to negotiate in a democratic fashion. What the minister said out of his own lips indicated that he did not understand democracy. I do not intend to become involved in a dog fight with the minister. I just want to make my points simply and occasionally take a crack at something the minister said which was pretty silly in relation to the facts, in the hope that every person in the country knows what this debate is all about.

Rightly or wrongly, Crow rates are part of the agreement which built Canada. Years ago the people of Quebec and Ontario were faced with the rush for land by Americans from the south. That was stopped in 1812-1819. Later on, to stop the rush for land, people from all over the world—people from Europe and Asia and even people from Quebec, Ontario and the maritimes—were asked by the federal government to settle in the west, which was described at that time as a desert unfit for human habitation. The key to bringing the population there was the railway.

The government which formed the nation sold its soul and its wealth to bribe the company to come in and construct a railway. As part of the deal a pledge was made to the immigrants who came. We tried to protect them in various ways. An agreement was made, the details of which are not important to this debate. Advertisements were placed in newspapers across the country and in Europe guaranteeing that if people came to western Canada they would always have an opportunity to market their grain. We settled the desert and made it one of the most productive places in the world in three generations. Always in the back of our minds we knew that we had a protection, a maximum rate on the hauling of grain to export position. This agreement became a statute in 1926. It has been amended, changed, confirmed and reconfirmed. The Crow rate is a mighty important but small part of our national Constitution.

When the report of the Hall commission came down five years ago, I stood in my place in the House and said on behalf of all westerners that the report was our Magna Carta, and it was. When the Minister of Transport made his statement in Winnipeg just last week, once again I rose in my place and questioned the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) in the House. I asked him to protest this betrayal of the Railway Act, the National Transportation Act and the agreement on the Crow by threatening to resign if the government did not change its direction. This is our Magna Carta; this is part of the Canadian Constitution.

In its judgment a few months ago, the Supreme Court of Canada made it very clear to the whole world that our Constitution is not only comprised of written law. Our Constitution is comprised of the common law, customs, beliefs and oral agreements. It is comprised of the statutes of the nation, as well as the bills of rights of various provinces and at the national level. I hope it will be comprised of the new Canada

Act some day. The decision of the Supreme Court made clear that the Constitution was not just what a bunch of lawyers wrote down or what the statutes provided. It is comprised of many things. They call them "conventions"; I just call it the understanding of the rights of people. What we have had for years and years is our right.

I will not enter into academic, legalistic high school arguments about right or wrong in this issue, but we should not change the Magna Carta every 85 years, even if the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Agriculture say we should. A fundamental right cannot be changed in a year or two. It is only changed by agreement of all parties, not by agreement of just a few.

I should like to refer to an editorial which appeared in the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, a newspaper which has supported, as have many westerners, a re-examination of the Crow on a rational basis and a change to this part of the Constitution by discussing the actual situation. As I read the article, the minister will know that there is no animosity in the heart of this newspaper toward him. It reads:

Jean-Luc Pepin made his presence felt as never before in Saskatchewan this week. He left in his wake the impression of a personable, even charming, individual but one who unfortunately failed to grasp the mood of a province wherein many are feeling a sense of betrayal over proposed changes to the long-cherished Crow rate.

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What this means is that the main message the transport minister should have delivered did not come through. He spoke in glowing terms and with impeccable logic of the ideal transport system to come as result of finally breaking the logjam over the Crow rate.

The idea of tackling the Crow rate issue is one whose time has come.

But Pepin did not implant the belief that the vast improvements he foresees are guaranteed. He assumed a trust in his faraway central government that has become battered in recent years in the west. He assumed a trust in railway companies that has never been widely felt here.

He left worried Saskatchewan residents in his wake. They are saying, in effect, "but what if we pay all this extra money and the system is not improved? What if the railways are saying five years from now that yes, they have more revenue, but it's still not enough?"

They have been doing that for 50 years. The editorial continues:

That is admittedly what politicians call the worst-case scenario. It reflects the emotion that surrounds the Crow rate issue. It reflects the symbolism to many Westerners in the act of striking down the 1897 statute that enshrined this one great concession from the centre of power.

That article was from a western newspaper. An eastern paper, *The Globe and Mail*, writes the same thing only in a different way. On February 9, 1982, the following appeared in an article in that paper:

The fact is that the prairies do not trust the federal government. They have no faith in any promises Mr. Pepin may make, no faith in any promises his government may make. They have the Crow. They'll stick to the Crow.

Will the federal government ever grasp the idea that it takes action, not promises, to win back a totally disillusioned electorate?

If that does not impress the House, I have another article published in a local paper from Renfrew county, Ontario. The paper is called the *Renfrew Mercury* and the article appeared