

Western Grain Transportation Act

to certain regions of the country. The Crow rate is of equal, if not surpassing, importance to the lifeblood of western Canada. That is why we are on our feet again and again, and we will continue until the Government uses every last stop measure that it can possibly pull out of the rule book to end this matter.

If the Government is to continue guillotining the Crow, so be it. Let the people of Canada know where the Government is going. I would prefer that the Government would recall what it said in introducing the Western Development Fund some time ago. It stated, "The Government does not prejudge the disposition of these funds. Westerners will have much to say in this decision, as they should, and they will find the federal Government eager to listen". How hollow are those words! Western Canadians are still waiting for the Government's purported eagerness to listen.

Mr. Pepin: For three years the West has been saying, "Do something". Where were you all that time?

Mr. Huntington: Do something right.

Mr. Pepin: Pathetic.

Mr. Roche: At the heart of the principle of the Bill, is the question involving the freedom of choice, about which we have heard a good deal in the debate. The question was opened up by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). To repeat, it is the freedom of choice for which we are arguing, in directly attacking the principle of the Bill. Freedom of choice would allow the producer the choice between taking the Government subsidy or forwarding it on to the railways. That would correspond to the position of my own provincial Government, the Government of Alberta, which has heavily criticized—

Mr. Pepin: What about Saskatchewan?

Mr. Roche: —the payment of all benefits to the railways alone, on the grounds that Canada will lose the opportunity to make market responsive improvements to both the grain handling system and to the economic development potential in western Canada.

• (1115)

We have statements on file made by the Alberta Government which have already been sent to the Government. These are statements made particularly by the Ministers of Economic Development and Agriculture in the Government of Alberta who have noted that it is their intent to see that the federal Government lives up to previous commitments that it has made to western Canada, and commitments in particular which are in the best interest of Alberta's agricultural and economic development.

The question before the House now concerns the benefit paid directly to producers. Canada is going to lose the opportunity to make market responsive improvements to both the grain handling system and the economic development potential

in western Canada. We consider that to be really an unfortunate move in the extreme because of the dangers that it will present to industrial development and agricultural potential in western Canada. Those are the questions before us.

The Ministers from the Government of Alberta concluded their argumentation by noting that if the reported changes are made, that is, giving the subsidy entirely to the railways, the federal Government will have ensured that the Crow rate benefits will have been lost and that any offsetting economic development benefits will have been sacrificed.

I see that my time is short. Once again Members are forced to summarize their argumentation rapidly on an extremely complex Bill. My colleague from Vegreville went to the point of listing 14 points that are the heart of this Bill. I simply say that it is very unfortunate and harmful to intelligent debate and discourse in this House for the Government to keep imposing time allocation, so that Members are prevented from fully elaborating, on behalf of their constituents and the people of Canada, the full ramifications of this Bill and what it will do to our whole national fabric.

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, in addressing this important issue I want to expand upon some points that my colleagues have previously made in this debate, and upon two points in particular which I want to address to the nation as a whole and not simply for Canadians living in the Prairies or any particular region of Canada. I want to make these points in the national interest of the country.

The Bill that the Government has before Parliament ought to be defeated, taken from this place, and not brought back. The point has been made on numerous occasions that this Bill is wrong in principle.

The principle of the Crow rate is to be accurately regarded as the Magna Carta of the West. As many Members have said, it is fully comparable in its significance to language rights for minorities in different parts of our country and, as the previous Member just said, comparable to the Canada-U.S. automotive agreement for working Canadians in other parts of Canada. The point I want to make is that in principle it is important to keep this commitment that was made to our prairie Canadians many years ago. It ought not to be changed because of that principle.

I want to go beyond that question to deal with the basic matter of dollars and cents. I have heard some Canadians question how we can continue subsidizing the prairie farmer to the extent that we have in the past, and that surely it should be changed. On behalf of my Party I want to say that surely it should not be changed. Let me explain why.

If we look at the international grain trade market and consider who our principal competitors are, they are the United States, Argentina, and Australia. What is the situation in terms of grain farmers in those three countries?

In the United States the degree of subsidy for the over-all cost of shipment of grain is higher than that provided to Canadian grain farmers. That is the first point.