

Winnipeg, said this—his words, I believe, should be immortalized in *Hansard*—and I quote:

—I have a large amount of sympathy for the small, independent truckers because in my years in the railroad I watched a lot of good, independent little truckers with one, two, three or four trucks get run right off the road by the railroads when they went into the trucking business.

The NDP motion would do just that, Mr. Speaker. Not only would it run the truckers off the road, it would not even allow them on the road. Are we really to believe that Members of the NDP are saying one thing in the House against trucking, against 10,000 employees in Manitoba, against companies which are just asking to be competitive, but when faced by these people in Manitoba it is a different story? They say there, “Look, fellows, we have a lot of sympathy. We understand. We like you”. When they come in here, however, they move motions against the very people they are trying to say they understand.

Yesterday afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I had a conversation with a trucker and a farmer. The trucker is independent. He has one truck. The farmer is very progressive. We talked about this very subject, and in the five minute conversation we had, those two fellows were ready to make a deal if the Crow rate would allow it. It was the marketplace in action, Mr. Speaker. The trucker was willing to move the grain. The farmer wanted the grain moved. What these two people were asking for was a fair deal under the Crow Act. The New Democratic Party would say, “No, you cannot make those deals. But if you make those deals, the railroads will still get the money, and the trucker will not and the farmer will not”. When the New Democratic Party Members rise in their seats time after time and say they are for the little guy, it is time their motions showed it rather than again and again defeating the competitive edge which so many ordinary Canadians want.

Mr. Terry Sargeant (Selkirk-Interlake): Mr. Speaker, this is really a notable day. I never thought I would see the day in the House of Commons when the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) would defend in such glowing terms a Liberal piece of legislation. I never thought I would see the day when the Hon. Member for Provencher would be favouring programs which would inevitably lead to the death of many prairie towns. I found it surprising when he said there was no historical evidence of that ever happening. All the Hon. Member has to do is to look around the Prairies. Indeed, he should turn to his right and talk to the gentleman beside him, the Hon. Member for Saskatoon (Mr. Hnatyshyn) who spoke of a community by the name of Arelee which had that very thing happen to it. I never thought I would see the day when the Hon. Member for Provencher, who I would have thought was an otherwise intelligent person, would so completely misconstrue the sense of the amendment which we have put before the House.

This Party has proposed a number of amendments to this piece of legislation. Indeed, I believe it is over 100. If Hon. Members in the Party to my right will take a look at these amendments as a whole they will realize that these amendments have to be accepted as a whole. If they are viewed, in

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this way, it will be seen that, what we will be doing is saving the Crownsnest Pass rates as they now exist. We are not prepared merely to modify the Bill to make it slightly less harmful to western farmers, as Hon. Members in the Conservative Party seem inclined to do. I am really quite disappointed, Mr. Speaker, in some of the speeches we have heard this afternoon from the Conservative Party. However, that is not entirely surprising. That Party has been all over the map on the Crownsnest Pass legislation for some time now. I am sure that before this piece of legislation finally gets through the House of Commons, it will be further all over the map.

I would like to speak a little more specifically to Motion No. 34. It is an amendment which is particularly important to people trying to farm in relatively remote grain growing regions of the Prairies. I am thinking particularly of farmers in areas such as Fisher Branch, which has been mentioned once or twice this afternoon, and other communities in my constituency such as Riverton and Arborg which sit at the end of rail lines. Defending branch lines against railway plans to abandon them has become a life and death struggle for many of these prairie communities. That may sound like a bit of an overstatement. However, when one sees elevator after elevator closed because the branch line has been abandoned, and when one sees countless prairie towns and villages, which are dependent on those elevators for their survival, die and all but blow away, it becomes very clear that what we are talking about is indeed a life and death struggle. For communities like Riverton and Fisher Branch, saving branch line abandonment is doubly critical. Not only are these towns, like many prairie towns, dependent on the branch line and the country elevator for their wellbeing, but because of the greater distance to major grain delivery points, the farmers in those regions depend to a greater extent on the maintenance of branch line service in order to keep their costs of production somewhat manageable.

Motion No. 34, which was put forward by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), would strike from Bill C-155 Clause 17(4). By doing that this motion would strike from the Bill a clause which would only encourage branch line abandonment. Most Hon. Members will know, I am sure, that with abandonment go the elevators. In their place we would get large inland grain terminals serviced by truck rather than rail.

● (1620)

I am not supporting this motion because I want to make it tough for small trucking firms on the Prairies, but rather because I think it is in their interest, just as it is in the interest of prairie communities and farmers, to preserve our system of branch lines and country elevators. What benefit can there be to these small trucking companies in the slow demise of prairie communities? Without this amendment it will be wide open for the Administrator of the Grain Transportation Agency to give subsidies to truck grain or ship it by rail. By doing that, the Bill will open the door for trucks to compete with the shipment of grain by rail on branch lines. That will lower the traffic and revenue on those branch lines and contribute to the