

Western Grain Transportation Act

basic construction of how the Crownest rate came about and how those coal lands became available. I want to take issue with the fact that we cannot debate the coal lands in a separate Bill so that the people of Canada can understand the concerns of western Canada. When we see that the Government of Canada is mainly represented by eastern representatives dictating policies and programs that will adversely affect the people of British Columbia and the Prairies, I think that matter should be looked at in a democratic, sincere and sensitive way.

For a moment I want to reflect on some of the things that have happened. This land was turned over to the Dominion of Canada back in 1897. In 1897, through the Crowsnest agreement when it was made, the 50,000 acres were set aside. It was said that the land could only be developed if it was to produce for domestic use and the produce could only be sold at \$2 a tonne loaded on the cars. We realize on this side of the House and we in British Columbia realize that that is not feasible today. We are prepared to discuss the removal of that land from the Crowsnest agreement but not if we have to support the transportation portion of the Bill and have to take it out on the farmers of the Prairies and of British Columbia. We think that is wrong, and we have said so. We have asked to have the Bill divided, but the sensitivity on this side of the House is ignored. For the life of me I wonder why.

● (1800)

I know that CP and the Fording Coal Company, a subsidiary of CP, have made inquiries with regard to the development of these coal lands. It could be that some sweetheart deal is already in the process. On Thursday of last week I asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien) if it would be possible for the West to supply coal to central Canada for its industrial belt which is now buying as much as 16 million tonnes of coal from the United States. I would like to indicate the answer I received from the Minister and the concern I have for those coal blocs when I receive such an answer. He said:

—I am informed that some coal has been imported from British Columbia to the East in small quantities.

Imported from British Columbia! Is that what the Government of Canada thinks of British Columbia? As a Member of Parliament I resent it in the strongest possible terms. I resent the fact that we were unable to separate the Bill so that we could deal with the coal deposits. These are 50,000 acres of the richest coal land, estimated to be valued at \$450 billion. While I am speaking in the House, there is ongoing research in drilling for oil. A contract was let in that area for the drilling of oil. If Alberta, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland can have their energy policies and dictate their energy programs, the energy policy in British Columbia should not be dictated by the House of Commons or the Dominion of Canada. B.C. energy must be turned back to the Province of British Columbia from where it first came. To suggest that it is imported is an insult to British Columbians, and I resent it in the strongest possible manner.

Also I resent the fact that MacMillan-Bloedel, Fording and other companies from the West to which Conservative Members referred are lobbying us. They are subsidiaries of CP. They are lobbying us to pass this Bill. I will not be a lobbyist for CP or any other large company which feels its interests are more important than those of my constituents. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and the Minister of Energy are not even in the House when this important piece of legislation is being discussed. It is another insult which we cannot and must not allow to go unheard.

I have people lobbying me and suggesting that I am opposed to the restructuring of our railways and our transportation system. For 35 years I have worked on the railways. I know as well as anyone else that our transportation system must be upgraded. There must be a method of doing it. I know that railway workers and miners in British Columbia do not want to have it upgraded on the backs of the farmers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. That is not how it must be done. It must be done under a transportation Bill which recognizes the needs of the country. It must be done in a way which will not destroy another very viable and valuable industry which the country needs. For farmers to be designed as the ones to pay for the improvement of the railway system is wrong, and we cannot understand it.

At the present time the railways are offering to purchase railways in the United States which would provide a possibility for diverting grain to the South while Canadian farmers would pay the extra rates. I think that is wrong. The Minister should immediately step in and say that Canadian products, especially grain and other commodities, must be shipped on Canadian railways through Canadian ports before any subsidies will be offered by any government or any group.

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill C-155. I would like to make a few comments on closure and then indicate how I personally feel about the Bill before the House. When I first came here as a Member of Parliament, I felt very strongly that I could represent the people of my constituency with honour, integrity and a sense of feeling which is only gained from living in a constituency or in a particular area. Basically I thought all Hon. Members of Parliament would sit with open ears during debates and allow the exchange of ideas to take place so that Opposition Members could play their role by modifying bad legislation. In the parliamentary system which I understood, we in the House of Commons, as Members representing all of Canada, would reach a solution that would be palatable to every part of the country. Instead I found much to my dismay and sorrow that every time a piece of bad legislation came before the House or a piece of legislation with which some Members disagreed, the Government moved in with closure or time allocation which is another form of closure. It is not a place for debate; it is not a place in which to exchange ideas.

I doubt whether Hon. Members sitting on the Liberal backbenches really understand what the Crow rate is all about or what Bill C-155 does. For example, let me indicate what