

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 6, 1983

The House met at 11 a.m.

• (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The House resumed from Tuesday, October 4, 1983 consideration of Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Transport; and Motion No. 33 (Mr. Mazankowski).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Chair sees the Hon. Member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) rising but it is the Chair's understanding that he has used his allotted time.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Could the House tell us when, in fact, the Speaker would be addressing the question of the procedural debates, which was offered to take place this morning?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, I believe the Speaker indicated that she would be entertaining arguments this afternoon. I presume now, in light of the special debate that will be taking place this afternoon, it may occur after that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): That is my understanding as well.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of Motion No. 33 moved by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) which is now before the House. The purpose of this amendment is to make a change to Clause 17 of the legislation. Clause 17 deals with the duties and functions of the Administrator. In Clause 17(1)(d) as it is now worded, the Administrator would have the power to "promote reciprocal and other arrangements between the railway companies to facilitate the efficient and reliable movement of grain for the purpose of maximizing returns to producers".

I would note this clause as presently worded would not give the Administrator the power to require or to order the companies to ensure the movement of grain in the most efficient possible manner. It would merely ensure that such arrange-

ments between the various railways would be promoted. The purpose of this amendment would be to include the words "and shall require", in Clause 17(d), thereby ensuring that the Administrator would in fact have the power to order where necessary—and, of course, it would not always be necessary—the railway companies to exchange cars in the most efficient possible manner.

• (1110)

We in this Party have argued that there is in fact no need for a Grain Transportation Agency and that the Canadian Wheat Board should be empowered to carry on in the manner in which it has performed its functions in the past. I am pleased to note that the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) was, as usual, very eloquent in his support of the Canadian Wheat Board. Naturally we are also concerned that, because of our position on the Grain Transportation Agency, the Administrator may already have too much power under this Act.

The purpose of this amendment is to recognize that as long as we are to have a Grain Transportation Agency and an Administrator with powers to perform under the Act and to assist the Grain Transportation Agency, one of the essential powers should be the power to require the efficient use of railway cars. No matter what public agency ultimately has control over the transportation of grain, whether it be the Wheat Board—and it is our view that it should be the Wheat Board—the Canadian Grains Commission, the Canadian Grain Transportation Agency as proposed in the Bill or whatever, it should have the power to direct the railroads to exchange cars to promote efficiency.

There should be far more interchange between CP and CN in order to get these two companies working together for shorter hauls and quicker delivery of grain. Ultimately we in this Party support the integration of the railway system in Canada. We believe it is about time the railway transportation system should progressively be brought under the ownership of the people of Canada. In its present form this Bill would ensure a bonanza to the shareholders of CP, but it would ensure tremendous losses to Canadian farmers. It is for that reason that we have called for the Bill to be split and for there to be a speedy upgrading of rail facilities as well as a return of the coal lands to the Province of British Columbia. In so far as this Bill would impoverish farmers and benefit the shareholders of CP, obviously we are totally opposed to it.

In terms of the amendment itself, at the present time the Crow rate allegedly involves tremendous losses to the railway companies; they cry great crocodile tears at how much money they are losing and they hang on to loaded cars of grain for