

Western Grain Transportation Act

Clause goes on to indicate that proposed regulations will be examined for thirty days before the Committee to which they have been referred.

I think that once the debate on Bill C-155 is over, it would be extremely unfortunate if the first time proposed regulations are laid before the House or its Committees, we would again have to go through a full debate on the Crow in one or two or five years. In the West, we were told by interested parties, both in public and in private, that it took guts to make changes in the Crow rate. They were congratulating us, and perhaps if Hon. Members would give me a chance, I could find in the committee proceedings the part where they congratulated us, and I am not saying that everyone was, because you cannot please everyone, but they were congratulating the Government for acting as it did, because it was not easy to deal with the Crow rate.

In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I think there has been abuse. In committee, all these amendments did not give rise to any lengthy debate among the Parties. They were discussed only for a few minutes.

Not knowing whether the debate will be resumed or not is not the worst. The worst problem with the debate on changes in the Crow rate is that we don't know what the Opposition parties will be thinking tomorrow.

The New Democratic Party showed some consistency in the matter, on Motions Nos. 47, 48 and 49 and in the entire debate. It showed some back bone, because at least its Members were opposed. I do not agree with them, but at least they were opposed from the start. The Progressive Conservative Party has been less consistent in its policy. I think it is an open secret that the Progressive Conservative Party and its Members, as far as Motions Nos. 47, 48 and 49 and the rest of the debate is concerned, have changed position four or five times since the debate began. My problem is not whether Motions Nos. 47, 48 and 49 and the clauses of this Bill to which amendments are being requested would constitute a valid subject of debate in the future, my problem is, how many times does the Progressive Conservative Party intend to change its position? Not long ago, I read an article in *La terre de chez-nous* by Mario Dumais. It was an editorial, under the heading: The Conservatives and the Crow. One party, three policies. Subsequently, in some comments of my own in the House, said "One party, four policies", because the Progressive Conservative Party had one policy in Quebec and another policy in the West, but in fact, it has none at all. During the debate in committee, if I remember correctly, they changed policies twice, and according to what we are hearing today, the Progressive Conservative Party would have us believe it favors the status quo. However, even the present leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Mulroney), during the last leadership convention, insisted that the Government was going in the right direction. He was discussing the changes in Bill C-155, tabled in May. He insisted that the Government was going in

the right direction. He said that the then Minister of Transport should perhaps be willing to compromise, but that he was on the right track with Bill C-155. Since then, we all know what happened. One evening, the Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) was sitting in committee, and he probably decided it was his party's official position, you never can tell with the Progressive Conservative Party, but it probably was, and he suggested maintaining the status quo on the Crow rate.

• (1650)

In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to conclude on this note, I feel that as far as what has been said up to now about the motions before the House, there has been a marked tendency to ignore the fact that the Committees of the House of Commons would also have a function, and that these Committees would be asked to go through, to scrutinize proposed regulations, that they would be able to meet for up to thirty days—I am referring to Clause 22(3)—and that in fact, the hour of debate that would take place here in the House of Commons would represent the official position of the Parties, considering that at the committee stage, it should have been possible to go through all the minor flaws that might be present in these proposed regulations.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the Hon. Member now?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Perhaps I should explain that it is not up to the Chair to decide whether the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville may put a question but to the Hon. Member himself to either agree or refuse to entertain the question.

Mr. Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Lévis (Mr. Gourde) mentioned that democracy is very important in our country. However, according to Bill C-155, to refer the regulations to Committee requires a notice signed by fifteen Senators or thirty Members of the House of Commons, and I would like to know whether there is not a difference between Senators and Members of the House of Commons, since the latter are elected by the people, by the general public, and Senators are appointed by the Prime Minister. That is not democracy at all. Does the Hon. Member agree that this clause is not a truly democratic clause, since Senators are not elected? Does he agree with the principle of elected Senators, or does he agree with an anti-democratic system?

Mr. Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I think the Hon. Member's comments are entirely beside the point, and that he should urge the Members of his Party to attend the meetings of the Committee on Senate Reform more often, instead of asking whether or not Senators, because they are appointed, should or should not have the right to refer proposed regulations to Committee. That is not the problem, since the New Democratic Party has, at the present time, more than thirty Members in the House—