

*Government Orders*

odyssey here in Ottawa and hopefully the passage of this bill today is a tribute to the common sense of Parliament and a tribute to the inherent belief that a single Canadian can from time to time move mountains and make this place work in a sensible fashion.

We will be supporting Bill C-5. We encourage all members to do so, and we hope it will be swiftly passed by the Senate.

**Mr. Cid Samson (Timmins—Chapleau):** Mr. Speaker, when Bill C-5 was read for the second time in this House on January 26, I stated that this legislation had more far-reaching consequences than the government wanted us to believe.

While it is true that the Canadian Western Railway Corporation provides what is described as a good service to many farmers in Alberta, and while it also true that this service is essential to farmers of this region, what I tried to point out to this House before is that Bill C-5 has more far-reaching implications than to allow this small railroad company to avoid entanglement with many levels of legislation which is according to its owner threatening its survival.

In committee, the owner of the Canadian Western Railway and labour representatives testified, which reinforced my opinion that Bill C-5 should not be passed and that if it were not passed it would not result in any injury to the farmers of that region who need this branch line to get their grain shipped to the coast.

Before I again explain to this House why I oppose this bill, I would like to point out a few things that will hopefully show farmers in that region of Alberta how the passage of Bill C-5 should not—and I stress that point—affect service to them.

Without Bill C-5, the CWR received a \$1.7 million grant to commence the operation of this branch line. According to the owner of this company, the money was paid to CN as a down payment. Some of it bought equipment, some of it paid pre-start up operation costs. That is a pretty substantial sum of money to help a company get started. Without Bill C-5, CWR has managed to cut the costs of operating the railway line and that made it cheaper to haul the grain.

When testifying before the legislative committee studying this bill, the owner of the railway in question stated:

This line was a high cost line. In the hearings, it was shown to be one of the higher cost lines on the Canadian prairies, operating at a cost in excess of 44 cents per tonne per mile for the grain carried. All costs into the system have progressively lowered themselves from the first year of operation; we are now costing the system approximately 22 cents per tonne per mile.

That does not strike me as a company being in an impossible situation. It seems to be doing very well. Why Bill C-5, then?

The lines and tracks used by CWR were constructed between 1909 and 1911 by the Canadian Northern Railway. Shortly thereafter, the Canadian Northern Railway, like many of the regional railways built during the railway boom of the late 1800s and early 1900s, found itself in financial difficulty and by the year 1919 the Government of Canada acquired ownership and control of the Canadian Northern Railway company.

The portion of the line under consideration in Bill C-5 was the former Canadian National Railway's Stettler subdivision. Its primary function then—and it is the same now—is to transport grain from the elevators along the line to CN's main track for delivery to the ports in Vancouver. This line has been designated as an integral part of the basic railway network and became protected against abandonment until the year 2000.

It is to be argued then that the Central Western Railway remains connected with other provinces and continues by its main function to be advantageous to Canada.

There is much more at stake than allowing a small company to fall retroactively under the National Transportation Act proviso for short line railways. Again, we must wonder about the intent of Bill C-5. Because of the far-reaching implications I have mentioned, and the need to protect this railroad line, I would argue that in effect the passage of Bill C-5 would be to the disadvantage of grain farmers rather than to their advantage.

The federal government has been generous toward the CWR in the past, but without federal involvement can we assure the grain farmers that the railway will be able to continue to operate? It seems to me that these days this government is more inclined to cut grants rather than to give them. When the government is reduced to slashing funds to such groups as veterans, women and