

Western Grain Transportation Act

Argentinians and the Australians as well, and we get rid of the Crow rate and in effect increase the price to producers of transporting grain, then they will no longer be competitive. That alone is a good argument for keeping the Crow rate for our western Canadian farmers.

Many Members of this House may not realize that the western Canadian farmer, particularly those in Saskatchewan, live further away from a sea port than any other grain farmers in the world. The farmers in Saskatchewan are about 400 to 600 miles further away from ports than the farmers in the U.S. who have the Mississippi-Missouri River system, or the Argentinians who have the ocean, or the Australians or the Europeans. If we get rid of the Crow rate and increase the cost of shipping grain by 400 per cent or 500 per cent in eight or nine years, then a lot of those farmers are going to be driven out of business because, once again, they will not be world competitive.

As far as jobs are concerned in this country as a whole, the farm machinery business of Massey-Ferguson or White Farm depend on the western Canadian economy and farmers staying on the land. If we slash our assistance to farmers, which is what the Crow rate is, and other countries continue to support their farmers or become more and more protectionist, then everyone in this country is going to suffer. It will be the country as a whole that suffers, not just the farmer.

This is not just a regional issue on the Prairies, it is a national issue of importance to all of Canada. That is why this Bill must not pass the House of Commons. That is why every Member should be aware of the irreparable damage being done. The fight to save the Crow has united many farmers and westerners who are often on the opposite side on political issues. The fight to keep the Crow is more serious than any that has been fought on the Prairies for many, many years. It is the most serious challenge our prairie farmers have faced probably since the great depression of the 1930s when we had a depression and drought at the same time.

Mr. Benjamin: And Liberals and Tories.

Mr. Nystrom: It is a fight which must be won, Mr. Speaker. We must persuade the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and the mandarins in his Department to keep the Crow. The farmers in western Canada need the Crow and they are going to keep it because it is so important to each and every one of us. It is very frustrating to see them buy, hook, line and sinker, the arguments of the CPR or the big grain companies that the rate must go up by 400 per cent or 500 per cent. It is very frustrating to see so many Conservative Members from western Canada sitting on their hands and remaining quiet when it comes to saving the Crow.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nystrom: Here they are not putting up any speakers any more. They have three times as many Members as we have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nystrom: But they are putting up speakers at a rate of only one to one, and sometimes not even that. They are caving in. I suspect their new leader with all his ties in the corporate boardrooms and all his friends in the CPR, Power Corporation—

Mr. Kempling: And all your friends in the Socialist International.

Mr. Nystrom: With all the friends he has which are the same friends of the Liberal Party, he has said, look, I would sooner see us get rid of the Crow before the next election campaign because—I am told that Brian Mulroney was a Member of the Liberal Party. I am not sure about that.

Mr. Mazankowski: You ought to know, you have been there for the last five years.

Mr. Nystrom: The same difference, Mr. Speaker. He has the same friends and he is not going to stand up for western Canada. In fact, I have a quote here from him during the leadership campaign which says: "Montreal businessman Brian Mulroney agrees that the Liberal Government is going in the right direction on the Crow issue".

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Nystrom: No wonder the Hon. Member for Assiniboia sits very quietly in his seat. Brian Mulroney, the new leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, has already sold out western Canada by saying that the Liberal Government is going in the right direction on the Crow rate. No wonder the Conservative Party is not putting up a fight in this House. No wonder so many of their Members from western Canada are sitting on their hands. No wonder the Hon. Member for St. Catharines gets up and sympathizes with western Canadian farmers, because that is where he grew up. Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that the Conservative Party has sold out to big business, to the CPR. They have a leader who comes from the corporate boardrooms and wants to get rid of the Crow rate for the farmer. The Liberal and Conservative Parties on this issue are exactly the same. They are not interested in helping the farmer, they are more interested in helping the CPR. The CPR has probably been the biggest welfare recipient this country has ever seen. We have a Bill before the House which will give even more money to the banks. Therefore, in closing I make an appeal to Hon. Members across the way that they take another look at the Bill and withdraw it. If they do not there will be thousands of farmers on the Prairies who will go bankrupt because they cannot afford to pay the increase in the freight rates.

● (2250)

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, this is not my favourite day for speaking. I have followed the debate, if we could call it that, with some interest. We have now heard from the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom). I must say that it is a relief to hear some sober thoughts from that caucus today.