

Western Grain Transportation Act

What about the variable rates, Mr. Speaker? This may be the most misunderstood aspect of the legislation. Rates which are higher than the basic distance related rate scale are not permitted, so the only possible variable rates are lower rates. Under what conditions are lower rates permitted? Clause 45 of the Bill is quite explicit on this point. I do not have time to quote from the Bill, but Hon. Members can look it up.

It is clear that if farmers do not want variable or lower rates, then they have the power to block them. Furthermore, in the first three years lower rates can only be applied during weekends or off-peak seasons. They cannot be applied to specific branch lines or specific areas except for contiguous points where the two railways operate side by side. This is spelled out in the Bill in Clause 46.

When I was out in Saskatchewan recently, Mr. Speaker, it was pointed out to me that there really are variable rates now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, order. I have been listening attentively as usual to the Hon. Member and I would like to quote for his edification Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, Fourth Edition, page 276, Citation 381:

The second reading of a Bill is that stage when it is proper to enter into a discussion and propose a motion relative to the principle of the measure. On the motion for the second reading, it is out of order to discuss the clauses of the Bill.

Now, the Hon. Member has been shifting from a general discussion of the Bill to a discussion of particular clauses. I would invite him to adhere to our procedures.

• (1520)

Mr. Flis: I respect your reprimand, Mr. Speaker. That is why I have been referring to these as sections, not clauses.

Let me go on to explain the new Grain Transportation Agency. A Grain Transportation Agency Administrator will be established with specific responsibilities for promoting system efficiencies, monitoring performance and, in co-operation with the Canadian Wheat Board, rail car allocation. Let me emphasize that we are not creating a large new bureaucracy. The Grain Transportation Agency will take over the function and staff of the existing Grain Transportation Coordinator.

Producers and members of the grain industry want to be involved in efforts to improve the system as they wanted to be involved in formulating this legislation. They will have that opportunity through a senior Grain Transportation Committee. The Committee's role will be to advise the GTA Administrator and the Minister on any and all matters related to grain transportation and handling. Producers will be represented on the Committee not only through their grain companies but through directly elected representatives as well. I do not have time to list them.

The block shipping system of the Canadian Wheat Board will remain. In fact there will be no changes to the roles or functions of either the Wheat Board or the Canadian Grain Commission.

Rather than enumerating the duties and functions of the Committee and the Administrator of the Grain Transportation

Agency, I will refer Members to the appropriate clauses of the Bill.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that the Government has made specific provision in the legislation for a review in 1985-86.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I think this Bill deserves the support of the House. Very few people will be 100 per cent satisfied with what it provides. We have seen that there are deep differences of view on certain aspects of this question, so it is physically impossible to satisfy everybody 100 per cent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Questions, comments, debate.

Mr. S. J. Korchinski (Mackenzie): Mr. Speaker, I never dreamed that I would be in the House on a day when we would be discussing what many western farmers have regarded for years as the Magna Carta of the grain industry. For years farmers have felt that no Government dare tamper with the Crow rate. There are many uncertainties and many areas where prices have been shooting up in the grain industry. In the past the farmer felt that with the Crow rate he had at least some security.

I listened to the NDP spokesman on transportation. I know that the NDP has been trying to cuddle up to labour to get its support over the years. They complain about the high cost of transportation but I do not think I have ever heard them refer to the wages a train engineer receives. I have a few neighbours who are engineers on trains and I am told they make \$300 per day. The NDP associates itself with the unions that represent the people who demand and get that money. In the end the wages come out of the farmers' pockets, from what he receives for the grain he sells. I am told that the average engineer earns something like \$52,000 per year but we never hear about that aspect of the cost.

I am very sad to see what is happening today. Someone has said that it takes a lot of courage to introduce a Bill of this nature. It also takes a lot of courage to defy the pressures that come with it. It does not take so much courage to assure the railways that they will have a profit of 20 per cent plus, but that will taken out of the pocket of the farmer. On April 21, 1983 the *Western Producer* carried the headline: "Crow changes will de-people the farms".

Every time railway employees strike for higher wages, the railways just reduce the number of employees. They turn to mechanization and are still able to operate. The same thing will happen on the farms. When costs are increased in any area some people will fall by the wayside and there will be a depopulation of many of the small villages. Some of them will disappear. A better railway system may result but at a very heavy price.

We have had surpluses before, Mr. Speaker, but we have always managed to move the grain in spite of the fact that some people claimed we had an inadequate railway system. There is nothing in the Bill to guarantee that there will not be strikes. There might be a terrific railway system but there will