

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

for Western Arctic was, in the Chair's opinion, a lead-in to the substantive discussion of the motion. However, the question having been put, I will allow the answer.

**Mr. Nickerson:** Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is it is not fleeting. It is a long-term trend.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Nickerson:** I can assure the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-St. James that there are very many Members within the Conservative Party who are quite prepared to argue at length so that the Crow Bill can be improved, and it will, as I said before, facilitate the transportation of western grain to the benefit of the producers of western Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Evans:** The answer was a lot better than the question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** Is the House ready for the question? I see the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse). Is he rising to speak?

**Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, this motion we are speaking to at the moment would amend an amendment to the original Bill, an amendment from the committee. It attempts to spell out some further duties for the Administrator, as you know. It is correct, as the Hon. Member points out, that we opposed this provision in committee. We opposed the addition of specifying powers to the Administrator to enter into agreements to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport where, in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers. We have had that debate. We just finished it. You begged us, Mr. Speaker, not to go back to that debate.

We thought in committee and argued in the House that this was an unnecessary power to mention. I would remind the House that the Administrator has a considerable amount of power in the Act already without making those extra powers quite explicit. The problem with making the powers more explicit is that it is not a completed circuit. The Administrator is being asked on behalf of producers to enter into agreements to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport, but there are no funds being allowed. There are no funds in this Bill. There are no funds available to complete those agreements.

What we are left with is a conclusion based on the testimony given at the committee hearings, where the former Deputy Minister of Transport indicated that the only source of such funds would be the funds available for keeping up branch lines. The funds would have to come from the branch line program. This is why many of my colleagues referred to branch line abandonment. We concluded, I think correctly, that this particular provision would permit the Administrator to provide funds, which would be in the form of a subsidy over and above what the farmer or the elevator company is prepared to pay, to

move grain—to trans-ship it from an existing branch line to a larger volume line with a heavier traffic flow not too far distant from it.

I think the conclusions drawn in the arguments made up to this point are probably correct. The effects were laid out quite clearly. What we have proposed, since this is part of the Bill at this stage, is to ameliorate the problems that it creates the way it is worded. We have attempted to restrict those subsidies, which we have assumed are going to be there, for use only on lines that have already been abandoned. We think this is the second best option.

I remind the House that during the course of discussions concerning branch line abandonments there were both task force reports and, at actual CTV hearings, suggestions that there should be short-term subsidies to producers and elevator companies to provide trucking service and off-line elevator services. None of them has ever been implemented for any period of time, but that has been discussed a great many times.

I would argue, if we are going to persist in having Clause 17(4) as it is now in the Bill before us, that to protect the interests of producers in those communities which do not have high-volume lines, an amendment such as we have proposed in Motion No. 35 is vital to those people. In Saskatchewan about 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the producers use lines that could be so affected. It is not something that is not relevant to a lot of producers; it is. It is something that we think could have been addressed by the Administrator who is, as the Act says, an agent of the Government of Canada through the powers, duties and functions previously described in the Act in the same provision. It gave the Administrator powers, according to the original Act and the Bill as it has come to us from committee, to:

—make recommendations to the Minister and such system participants as the Administrator considers appropriate to increase the capacity, reliability and efficiency of the grain transportation, shipping and handling system—

I think that would give the Administrator all the powers he needs to include truckers and trucking in those instances where it was deemed possible. Yet in committee it was felt necessary to spell that out, and so we have Clause 17(4). The fact it is spelled out now draws attention to some of the misuses to which it could be put. I would like to go into that for a few moments after the lunch hour.

May I call it one o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** Order. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

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**AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 2 p.m.