

Mr. Mazankowski: The Chairman of the Committee asks, how did it get there? It got there because of an amendment proposed by our Party and supported by the majority of Members on the Transport Committee. The actions of the NDP, in its desire to withdraw that particular clause, demonstrate two things. First of all, the NDP are against the trucking industry, the little trucker who buys his vehicle, has it serviced in a small town and hires local people to do the job. They are against the small trucking industry in western Canada. They are also against the producer because the motive behind this amendment is to maximize the return to the producer.

The authority of the Administrator is based upon the fact that the trucking of grain should be done only when it is in the best interests of the producer to do so. So that is a concomitant of this Party's determination to bring about a transportation system which is not only effective, efficient and reliable, but indeed one which will utilize all modes of transport to the greatest possible extent to ensure we can move more grain efficiently and reliably.

I find it very difficult to follow the twisted and warped logic of the NDP. I guess it is because they really do not know what is going on. They do not have representation in the farming community. If they had, they would know that producers are very keenly interested in bringing about a system which will be efficient, reliable and utilize all modes of transport. But once again they are employing their traditional scare tactics. They are saying: "If you do this, you are going to wipe out all the branch lines, destroy the Wheat Board and orderly marketing". That is all they rely on, scare tactics and their own ideological and philosophical beliefs. I submit to you, Sir, that following that logic is not in the best interests of the grain producer. That should be the bottom line of this whole Bill, even though there is much in it which will be very detrimental to the producer.

It has been universally accepted by everyone in this House, and anyone who knows anything about grain handling and transportation, that we do need an efficient, effective and reliable handling system. That really has a nice ring to it, but really there is not much in this legislation to promote efficiency. What we are doing is promoting the status quo, promoting a cost-plus regime. We are promoting a guaranteed annual income for the railways, which the NDP so universally embraces. They support that guaranteed annual income to the railroads and then cry about the fact that there is not enough efficiency. There again is the hypocrisy of the NDP. There are no rewards in this Bill for cost cutting, streamlining, speeding up deliveries or improving dependability. This particular clause we believe at least opens the door to allowing some of those things to develop.

In order to have the kind of system we are all desirous of achieving, we must make the best available use of all transport modes. Very basically, Mr. Speaker, trucks can play a complementary role in facilitating grain movement, all in the name of the producer. The trucking industry has been involved in the movement of grain for many years, they are not strangers to it,

but this Bill really closes the door to their involvement. The fact that the Government switched its option of payment really closed the door to any meaningful participation by the trucking industry.

We should really consider this very carefully, Mr. Speaker, because I think it is fair to say that in some instances savings can be accrued. The NDP asks who is going to pay the additional subsidy. We are looking at this as a cost saving to the producer and taxpayer, not as an additional expenditure. That is why the Chairman of the Committee ruled this particular provision in order. The Central Co-ordinating Agency Task Force report outlines the potential on some light and medium density branch lines to save something in the order of 41 cents a bushel. That is the difference between maintaining a branch line with light density and moving grain by truck. I suspect in some cases the individual producer would end up getting better service. So those are things which should in fact be taken into consideration.

We have the concept of the off-line elevator advanced in the Hall Report, which goes on to say this:

There are stations where some type of transportation service to grain elevators is imperative in order that producers in that area are not left in an impossible situation. The Commission has examined and evaluated a number of suggestions for the retention of service. In many cases present rail service was the more expensive option available. The Commission examined in some depth the concept of a mini-train operation, involving the use of lighter power and car equipment and transloading facilities. The Commission found that the mini-train concept while operationally feasible was not as practical a solution as the establishment of certain elevators as "off-line elevators". Grain receipts at these elevators would be transported to main line elevators by commercial truck at no additional cost to the producer.

Here we have the NDP wanting to close that option, a very important recommendation advanced by Mr. Justice Emmett Hall. We always hear them heaping accolades of praise on the former Chief Justice, but here is one very important recommendation, and all this enabling provision will do is give the Administrator the power to do some of those things advanced by Mr. Justice Emmett Hall.

• (1250)

I could go on and speak of the importance of the trucking industry and how it can play a more vital and integral part in facilitating the movement of grain, but perhaps I can save that for the debate on the next clause.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, it may be a good idea to set the record straight with a few facts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): First, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) accused the Government of putting this amendment in the Bill because it wanted to abandon branch lines. I think that was his contention. I would like to point out to Your Honour and to the House that the Government did not have this provision in the original draft of the Bill. As the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) said, it was he who proposed the amend-