

Western Grain Transportation Act

the consent of the House that the safety net amendments which I introduced this afternoon might now be considered. In that way we could use our time very well in examining the debate that has passed, at the same time using the time left in report stage debate to examine items of great seriousness and concern to the western farmer, namely, how we can provide protection during the time of the cost-price freeze that we all face. I should like to ask for consent for such a judgment by the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Chair suggests that there might be a disposition to dispose of the amendments currently under discussion and then, with the unanimous consent of the House, the House would be free to adopt any other amendments for consideration. Would Hon. Members care to comment?

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak to the point raised by the Minister of Transport. This Party is on record as early as this afternoon as expressing a willingness to debate those fundamental issues. The Minister referred to the proposition of the safety net. We would certainly have no objection to moving that forward for debate as it is very central to the Bill. We have not had an opportunity to debate it in committee or indeed to consider it in any form, since it was considered out of order.

I hope that in the course of consideration of the concept of the safety net we would be allowed to consider some of the motions we have advanced today, namely, the proposal to freeze the existing freight rate structure at least until July 31, 1986—that is this Party's version of a safety net—until such time as a review and study of the farmers' ability to pay and the impact upon producers, can be conducted. Second, we hope that we will be able to deal with the motion that was put forward with respect to the method of payment. Third, there is the motion dealing with the issue of the coal lands. As I indicated earlier today, it was only considered in a rather cursory fashion in committee because we ran out of time.

Mr. Benjamin: We moved an amendment.

Mr. Mazankowski: Yes, we did consider an amendment but the guillotine had been imposed and it was not dealt with in detail.

Subject to those conditions we would be prepared to move on to the amendments suggested by the Hon. Minister of Transport.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly clear what the Minister of Transport was asking. Does he suggest that we should now move on to other amendments tonight? I have no objection to moving on to the next set of amendments. We have been dealing with what I consider to be a vitally important matter, the question of accountability. I do not think any Member of the House would disagree with that.

The next set of amendments to be called in the order set down by the Speaker will deal with another vital and important matter. I do not doubt that by five o'clock or six o'clock tomorrow afternoon we will be reaching the point of dealing

with other important matters. We are prepared to sit continuously for as long as it takes to deal with the Bill in total.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, to clarify this, I recognize the noble spirit of debate expressed by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans). If we look at the record of debate during report stage—and the pattern has not changed during today's proceedings—we will see that the possibility of encountering the 30 or 40 amendments still on the Order Paper by five o'clock or six o'clock tomorrow afternoon is highly unlikely.

An Hon. Member: You should have thought of that before you moved closure.

Mr. Axworthy: The issue that I raised is not simply that of proceeding seriatim to allow the House to reorder its priorities by consent—not to dispose of any amendments but to reallocate the order in which we would deal with them. I suggest that in order to give full attention to the central issue in the time allotment available to us—the ability to pay issue which focuses around the safety net amendment—it might be brought forward as the next order of business when we conclude the group of amendments that we are dealing with.

I suggest this in the interests of debating the issues which are of critical importance. Members from western Canada know that when they go back to their constituencies there will be no issue of more importance. The Government believes that it is answering that issue through the amendments introduced this afternoon. I think it would only be fair for the Opposition to be in a position to respond and have an exchange of views across the floor of the House.

If we go according to the time pattern established by Members of the Opposition in the way they have conducted debate, the chance of our getting to the point of examining the matter within the time allocation, no matter how long we stay, is remote. In the interests of serving the right of the public to know where we stand on this issue, I would like to see if there is some way of arriving at an agreement.

Mr. Deans: Now I understand more clearly what we are dealing with, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister clarifying the matter for me.

If we continue as we are and it gets to 5.45 p.m. tomorrow afternoon and we have not yet dealt with this matter, we would be quite happy to extend the sitting to accommodate whatever additional time is necessary to deal with any amendments at that time outstanding.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief but I want to refer to the hallucinatory intervention of the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans). He alluded to a number of things in the course of his speech. In the course of reading a speech prepared by one of his researchers he gave a history of the evolution of the Crowsnest Pass rate.