

Western Grain Transportation Act

tor was brought in because the original Bill mentioned no positive aspects in terms of benefit to the western producers. There was not one reference to maximizing benefits to the western producers.

I simply ask my colleagues in the House who do not come from western Canada what they would do if there was legislation affecting their area and they had to speak on behalf of their constituents. What would their opinion be if the preoccupation of such legislation was to enrich the railways and take many other steps except ones which would positively affect the people residing in their area? That is precisely what we are faced with in this legislation. It is pie in the sky and anticipation of all sorts of economic activity, but the person who is most seriously and adversely affected is not mentioned in the legislation. That was the situation when this Bill was introduced.

In conclusion I want to assure Members of the House that as far as I am concerned the provisions of this Bill are unsatisfactory. There is no consensus in support of this legislation. We intend to vote against the legislation but we support this particular amendment.

Mr. Maurice A. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make two or three observations with respect to this Bill. First, the power which the amendment would vest in the grain commissioner is already vested in the Canadian Transport Commission, which has a western division and which is quite adequate to the task that this amendment will put upon the grain commissioner. It would seem to me that we would have an untenable situation if there were two different Government agencies with the same power over the railroads. The regulatory agency is the CTC and should remain so.

I wonder why the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) is arguing so vociferously in favour of this amendment and why he is so anxious to have it in the legislation if he is going to vote against the legislation. It seems to me to be somewhat of a contradiction in terms.

I believe the Hon. Member is correct when he says there is no consensus in the West on this proposed legislation. However, throughout his remarks he kept referring to the Bill as originally introduced in the House. We are not debating the Bill that was originally introduced in the House. We are debating the Bill as it has been returned to the House from the Standing Committee on Transport. It is quite different from the original Bill.

The changes in the Bill are due to many factors. The committee listened to people from across Canada, and the former Minister and present Minister approached amendments to the Bill with an open mind. The Bill has been extensively amended, with 89 amendments in committee itself.

The contention that this Bill is designed to enrich the railways is, of course, a canard. While there is no doubt that the railways will receive greater revenues, they also have imposed upon them a very heavy responsibility to build and maintain a modern rail transportation system for Canada. The

fact that all those who oppose this Bill have failed to mention is that a transportation system that is modern and efficient is absolutely essential to the development of a nation or part of a nation like Canada which covers such a vast territory, much of which is landlocked. If we are to be a trading nation—surely no one will argue that we will never go anywhere economically if we are not a trading nation—we must be able to deliver the goods to the world markets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. The Chair has been listening quite attentively to the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne). It seems that his remarks are of a general nature about the total Bill. It is quite possible that the Chair has missed the point that the Hon. Member wishes to make, relative to the amendment now before the House. In any case I would invite him to restrict himself to the amendment as much as possible because at the report stage that is exactly what Members ought to address themselves to.

● (1600)

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): I thank you for that admonition, Mr. Speaker. I was simply responding to some of the remarks made by the previous speaker who was speaking on the same amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I appreciate the Hon. Member's position. Unfortunately, it so happens that, in the course of debate, Members may go beyond the scope of the amendment before the House, but the Chair cannot unsay what has been said. As a general admonition, I would invite Hon. Members to avoid those digressions and come to the heart of the subject matter now before the House.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): That is a point well taken, Mr. Speaker. I will simply complete my remarks on this amendment by stating that the amendment is superfluous and redundant because it attempts to give to the Administrator the powers that already exist in the CTC where they rightfully reside, where the expertise is in matters of rail transportation and has no place in this particular Bill.

Mr. Huntington: Mr. Speaker, will the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) entertain a question?

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Sure, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Huntington: Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to the Hon. Member for Northumberland-Miramichi defend the CTC vis-a-vis the chairman of the new Grain Committee. Could he tell us what would motivate the chairman of the CTC to protect the interests of the grain producer in determining the most efficient and cost effective way of moving that grain? What is being asked for in this amendment is some form of protection for the producers so that the grain will not be delivered in a circuitous route when a more effective, as the