

Western Grain Transportation Act

year, plus or minus the total of the interim adjustment for the current crop year by", etc. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, who can understand that?

Mr. Pepin: I do.

Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek): The confusion and complexity of this Bill is almost mind boggling. The blended rate is the rate combining the new freight rate below the 31.1 million tonne export limit and the freight rate above the 31.1 million tonne export limit. We can easily remove this problem by removing the 31.1 million tonne limit, which is nothing but a disincentive to increased production.

Now, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) has advanced some very important points, one being that producers must be guaranteed an efficient, cost effective and reliable grains transportation system. When we look at the Bill, what does it do for us? There are no lower railway performance guarantees for the first three years. Under Clause 21, there will be only a notional scheme. I want to return to the word "notional". Sanctions to the railways will only be tallied and not levied. Also the chance to implement railway performance guarantees must pass parliamentary review. For three years the railways will get a free ride. I think Jack Horner must be smiling.

● (1115)

Our only hope in this whole business is the grain transportation Administrator. For a moment, let us consider how the Act treats him. First, a Senior Grain Transportation Committee must be set up. These people will be picked from a hide-bound institutional maze known as the Canadian grain industry. Under them will be the Grain Transportation Administrator. Clause 13 of the Bill states:

The Governor in Council may appoint an officer to be known as the Grain Transportation Agency Administrator to hold office during pleasure for a term not exceeding seven years.

These words, "to hold office during pleasure", mean that one is just a phone call away from dismissal. This man will be without any security of tenure. He will be at the whim of every senior bureaucrat and every senior grain trade member in Canada.

We can go further and consider some of the "mays" and "shalls" of this man's duties. Clause 17 states that the Administrator may do thus and so with the concurrence of the Committee, that is, the Senior Grain Transportation Committee; he may make recommendations to the Minister and he may provide advice. However, the one I like is found in Clause 17(f) which states that the Administrator may, in consultation with the Committee, review the role of the Committee with a view to identifying means of strengthening that role. Talk about the executive electing the executive!

If we consider some of the "shalls", as found in Clause 18(1)(e), the Administrator shall develop a notional scheme of sanctions applicable to the railway companies, and then a system of awards and penalties.

Everyone is familiar with the notions counter in drugstores or in Woolworths, supplying hairpins, bobbypins, nail files, etc. My dictionary defines "notional" as being "theoretical, speculative, existing in the mind only, imaginary, or given to foolish or fanciful moods or ideas". I have never seen this word used in previous legislation. Add that to a "notional scheme". My dictionary defines "scheme" as being a plan or program of action, especially a crafty or secret one.

It is interesting to note at the end of the schedule that, while we have to toil with the metric confusion, the railways can still use what I suppose are "as the Crow flies" miles, statute ones at that.

There are other methods and means of providing efficiency and cost effectiveness to rail and grain transportation which the Bill does not address. A few days ago, the Hon. Member for Timiskaming (Mr. MacDougall) asked, "Does grain really have to be weighed six times and graded three times before it is exported?" Maybe with the old box cars it was necessary, but it is certainly not with the new hoppers. Why do the railways operate on a 24 hours a day, seven-day-a week schedule? The grain companies, especially the terminals, normally operate five days a week, sometimes with eight-hour shifts, sometimes with 16-hour shifts. It is impossible to mesh these two systems. Reduction in turnaround time of our hopper cars of one day would be the saving of the equivalent of 1,000 hoppers, some \$73 million. These shortcomings will remain.

We should take a good look at what our competition in the United States is doing. Almost revolutionary rail and grain handling change is taking place. More interchange agreements are needed. Concerning use of producer hopper cars, there is a potential savings of \$600 per car to the producer.

The Bill will freeze us to the status quo, to our present system, for all time, and what do we have? The old rail lines and old elevators in western Canada have been written off years ago. Even the gravel ballast under the rails depreciates at the rate of 4 per cent a year. These structures rightfully belong to the taxpayers of Canada. Producers simply do not believe the railroad costing figures, yet we are asked to increase our expenses greatly without any assurance of increased returns. Canada has always said to our grain customers, "If you want our wheat, come on over and sit down and maybe we will sell you a little bit". We have never allowed one bushel of wheat to leave this country unsold. Surely this is not the way to merchandise in 1983.

● (1120)

I realize that this Bill does not look beyond the accumulation of our grain at terminal position, but with the billions of dollars to be spent under this legislation, surely we could try selling it from at least one overseas terminal even if it was necessary to build one, which I doubt. Let us put it where the customers are, such as in Singapore, Hong Kong or Rotterdam. Not all customers want nor can they handle grain in million-bushel lots by shiploads.

We need a crash program on research for hardy winter wheats if the Government is serious about increasing the