

The Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may 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.

Our amendment adds the following words:

—the grain producers, but such agreements shall not provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport from shipping points on rail lines which have not been abandoned by order of the Canadian Transport Commission.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Burnaby (Mr. Robinson), made it quite clear that simply in terms of process this is a very important route to take to ensure that those residents of small rural communities have an opportunity to appear before the CTC to make their views known in terms of what the impact on their community would be if grain that was traditionally and historically moving from a country elevator on a branch line was to be moved by a different mode of transport, primarily that of rubber.

A point made in committee, one which has been made by my colleagues in the House, that is the money to pay for the rubber hauling of grain as opposed to its movement by rail would not come from the Crow Bill as is proposed before this House. There is a bit of mythology being circulated in this country that the money that would subsidize the movement of grain by rubber would somehow come from the Crow Bill itself. That simply is not true, as is pointed out by Government officials who appeared before the Transport Committee. They pointed out the money would come from the branch line rehabilitation fund which we know is already short about \$600 million. We have seen, certainly since the 1977 hearings held by Mr. Justice Emmett Hall, that an awful lot of branch line funds that were supposedly going to be used by CN and CP to bring their branch lines into a reasonable state of quality simply were not used by the rail lines, and now Parliament has already had to introduce special funds in terms of another rehabilitation fund to ensure that those lines are picked up.

What we would see by leaving Clause 17(4) as it now stands is a self-fulfilling prophecy in many ways; for instance, the competition that would be coming from the rubber haul, I know Members of the Official Opposition have been saying, and certainly the Hon. Member for Peace River (Mr. Cooper) was saying on Thursday, that what the NDP is trying to do is to stop any kind of subsidy payments going to those commercial haulers and producers who are hauling grain in areas where there are no branch lines. Far be it the position of this Party to say that where there are no branch lines there should not be some kind of compensatory payments to those individuals, farmers and producers who have to haul simply to get to the branch lines.

What we are saying in terms of this amendment specifically is that there should not be abuse of the branch line rehabilitation fund in areas where there is an existing branch line and country elevator to bring rubber hauling into a more competitive position.

My colleague from Burnaby made a very important point that I plead with Government Members to listen and pay some attention to. I refer to the information given to the Transport Committee regarding the difficulties which the State of Iowa

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encountered when it made a very unfortunate move and allowed legislation very similar to the existing Clause 17(4) to come into existence, which was to make rubber movement of grain competitive to rail. The State of Iowa discovered that its highway system was being worn out by heavy commercial trucks hauling grain two to three times as fast as the government of Iowa could afford to repair and replace it with its existing system of financing roads. The State of Iowa moved to introduce a system of law similar, if not identical, to what is being proposed by the NDP and should be supported simply for economic and fiscal reasons, above and beyond some other points which I will be raising in a few minutes. What the State of Iowa found after bringing in legislation, similar to Motion No. 35 that we are proposing, was that it was cheaper by an enormous amount to move grain once again by rail. They had gone to rail, then they went to rubber, and now they are back to rail. The Iowa state transportation agency has warned other jurisdictions, in particular Canada, not to permit the mistake of transferring such movement from rail to road.

● (1125)

There has been an enormous abandonment of branch lines in Canada already, simply as a result of the legislation passed through the House. The Crow Bill would dramatically exacerbate the abandonment of rail lines because of the self-fulfilling design of Clause 17(4) which indicates that the Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may enter into agreements that are deemed to be in the best interests of grain producers. We are talking about a Bill which is making use of hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars. We know already from evidence given by farmers that they are worried about losing 30,000 or 40,000 farms because of the impact of Crow changes above and beyond those we are talking about in Clause 17(4). We are talking about losing 30,000 or 40,000 farms in the Peace area and in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The impact of losing that number of farms will be felt by schools, those who pay municipal taxes and small enterprises, whether it be farm implement suppliers, fertilizer suppliers, local butcher stores or hardware stores. We are talking about a very dramatic shift in population on the Prairies as a result of the Crow Bill as a whole.

We are pleading for common sense in terms of economics and that we follow the warning signal of the State of Iowa and not allow a massive shifting over from rail to road. As I said in previous speeches, it might look good for a little while. CP and CN—CN has one of the largest trucking firms in Canada—say that we should look at all the jobs being created for truckers and commercial haulers, that we should look at the tires being sold, the new repair shops coming on line, and so on. It is a myth that those are real jobs. We can only talk about that kind of job creation out of one side of our mouths, because we know at the other end or in other areas of the system that we are losing farms and tens of thousands of jobs as a result of poorly thought out legislation.

As my colleagues and I have said before, the Government of Canada stands indicted for not having brought before the House the proper economic information on the number of