

Western Grain Transportation Act

not have that advantage cannot develop their own economic base and become contributors to the larger national goal.

When I speak to provincial leaders and citizens who live in Provinces which receive a substantial part of their income through equalization payments, I do not hear that they want greater equalization payments. What I hear from them is that they want the right to develop their natural advantages in order to develop an economic base and become contributors to the national economic scene, rather than relying on ever-increasing equalization payments.

That, Mr. Speaker, takes me directly to this Bill. I appreciate that the Minister is in the House and he might find this a little odd, but I hope my remarks are not seen to be highly partisan because I approach this question on the basis of what is best for Canada as I see it, and what is best for us in western Canada.

Obviously this Bill, if it were passed, would radically change the infrastructure of western Canada. Any time change takes place there is the natural tendency to be fearful; that is human. Having said that, I think there is a consensus generally that there must be some change to the transportation system in western Canada. Why? Because there is the very distinct desire to diversify. Now, there has been diversification in agriculture and related industries in the West, but I think the Minister would agree with me that that has not resulted primarily because of Government leadership. Generally it has been economic reality where farmers and agri-business people have diversified for economic reasons. The question then is: Does this Bill enhance this diversification or will it hinder it? My view of the Bill before us today is that it will hinder it and I want to give the reasons why.

We agree there must be some change, there must be some diversification beyond that which is taking place, so we need a national transportation policy. This might seem a little odd to some Members, including some from the West, but I believe it sincerely. I do not think that our transportation system can be based solely on the concept of an export economy.

Mr. Pepin: Agreed.

Mr. Epp: I know for us in western Canada there is the argument of the net benefit of \$6 billion in exports and therefore that is the transportation system. But surely if we want more diversification, it must also be based very strongly on what is best in the way of internal diversification for Canada as a whole. While I believe there will always be a bias toward transportation in western Canada to the export market, I do not think we are well served by virtually looking at our total transportation policy from that perspective alone.

What concerns me with the present Bill, Mr. Speaker, is what happens to the ability to diversify in the livestock sector. I see nothing in the Bill which says to me that there will be greater opportunity for our livestock producers to develop that industry.

• (1125)

I would like to mention hog production. In speaking to producers of hogs in Manitoba, they tell me they now see a loss between \$3.75 and \$4 a hundred weight on hog production. There is concern that we are in fact increasing the distortion between grain production and non-grain production on the Prairies. The ability, for instance, of Provinces to top load programs plays into that distortion. Therefore I think it is very clear where the solution must lie.

If I can speak provincially for a moment, I do not see anything in the Bill which would enhance the ability of Churchill to become a major port. I know of no country that has ever given up voluntarily, by attrition, any salt water port. I have never seen any country that has been willing to allow its ports to deteriorate to the point at which one questions their viability. I have always seen the opposite, that those ports are developed, and I want to see Churchill developed. I want to see the railway developed. I want to see a diversification in Churchill, not only in grain but also in Saskatchewan potash. I want to see products being handled through Churchill for a longer period of time.

The former Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, who is now the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Chrétien), and I had as an objective: Why must we buy arctic technology? Why, as an arctic country, do we not develop the best arctic technology for ourselves, as Canadians? That matter is not addressed in the Bill.

In addition, what concerns me about the Bill is husbandry of the soil. I say that farmers must diversify for reasons of the soil, for reasons of economics, but the summer fallow wheat cycle simply does not address the problem any more. We are mining the soil. We must surely have legislation which will allow the farmer to farm the very best way the soil of which, for the moment, he is the steward. That must also be in the legislation.

Mr. Pepin: In the legislation?

Mr. Epp: I am saying in the legislation in terms of the philosophy which will allow farmers to make those decisions.

Mr. Pepin: But you can't put everything in the Bill.

Mr. Epp: The last point I want to make, and I said I would be short of time today, is this. The Minister is opposed to the hoist. He asks, "Why should there be further delay?" That brings me back to the first point I made. I believe that in the federal state called Canada it takes time to develop consensus. The Minister will say; "We have had Hall, we have had Snavelly, etc.; have we not had enough time?" I am convinced that a consensus is developing which would allow producers to consider these various options, including the one advanced by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). Therefore I suggest to the Minister, let us now use the new awakening in the farm community, in the western community, in fact in Canada, to develop that consensus and have