

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

Saskatchewan about 60 per cent of the population comes from ethnic backgrounds other than French and English.

What are these people celebrating? To a great extent they are remembering their past or celebrating success. They are saying: "We are here in Canada and we made it; we worked; we believed; we hung on and look at us now. We are important Canadians, free and independent." Our children are the luckiest people in the world because we helped build a nation that is strong and fair and that believes in people.

Part of what they built is being attacked by this Bill—a way of life. It is not necessarily a way of making a living but of a way of life. To illustrate that building process I can only relate to my own experience, to what I saw, was told and felt in the process of growing up in the developing farming country. In the farms around Saskatchewan the Crow rate is part of that development.

The story of the West is the classic story of the development of land, homesteads, wheat pools, wheat boards, branch lines, pasture, cattle, pigs and even gardens. The people have a love for their land and for their country. They are people who trust and believe that if you work hard for the country you would be paid back with a bountiful harvest and fair treatment. Are we in this House going to betray that trust?

My father came to North America when he was ten years old. He came to a place called Weldon, one of a family of pastured boys. He filed for a homestead before he was 16 and proved it before he was 18. Proving land in that part of Saskatchewan meant cutting and grubbing out trees, breaking 20 acres and building a house. My dad had the name of being a good man for the country because he and his oxen and horses broke a lot of land in that area in those first few years of development. He and his neighbours were builders who believed in the country. They grew grain when it sold for 20 cents a bushel and cost 19 cents per bushel to thresh. For a while they watched as their grain was purchased by line elevators for 50 cents and sold on the world market and even to the eastern market for \$2 per bushel.

They built a wheat pool system to get around that kind of problem. They bypassed some of the speculators through the wheat pool and increased the amount of money that came to them. In the 1920s handling charges for grain went from 22 cents per bushel to two cents per bushel with the advent of the wheat pools. This is a telling commentary on the corporate enterprise rip-off.

The need for western grain was recognized but there seemed to be no reason to grow it because the cost of transportation by train was so exorbitant. Then the Government made a deal with the railways to establish lower rates in exchange for land, property and money, which went to the railways to help them build the lines and also went to contribute to the development of farming communities in the West.

Transportation is one of the things that makes the Canadian West possible. The roads which were the first trails had romantic names, such as Carleton Trail, Kelsey Trail and Edmonton Trail, the three trails which go near my home. Then

came the railways and finally the airplanes. These all make the West possible.

If you lop off any one of these modes you effectively change the base of the West. That is what this Bill does, Mr. Speaker. Over a period of time it will lop off the railways as the means of moving grain, at least for the first few steps for a farmer. The first few steps in the movement of grain for export are done by truck. If you remove the rail line you force the farmer to use another mode.

The Minister says: "So what? use another mode." It is possible but it would kill the way of life which is ours. The branch line system was built by the railway companies and they saw the benefits of putting lines within reach of the farmers and within reach of productive lands. The communities grew up along those trails and then along the railways. Communities thrived because they were easily reached by the farmers. Not many people lived more than ten or so miles from town in those days. Post offices, schools, churches, hospitals, curling rinks, hardware stores, machinery dealers, restaurants, skating rinks—in a word, all of the necessities of life grew up in those communities. From these small towns came people like the President of the Board of the CNR, the President of the Bank of Canada, the President of the CBC, people like Gordie Howe and John Diefenbaker. I could go on ad infinitum naming people who have grown up on the Prairies. These communities are still producing high-calibre leaders for Canada because their roots are deep and their support has been firm.

● (1630)

This way of life has been eroding quite quickly in the last few years, aided by trends which some abhor but others espouse, trends such as centralization of schools, hospital care, machinery agencies and so on. These trends have been aided and abetted by Government policies, in some cases the policy of a CCF Government in Saskatchewan. Some of these centralizations were not defensible.

However, I grew up during the Second World War which changed the demographics of the Prairies so that services either had to be centralized or become non-existent. But the death blows to many communities were dealt by rail line abandonment, Mr. Speaker. In many cases, when the railway left the elevator left, and the farmer did not go to that town. Schools closed, stores closed and eventually hospitals and the post office moved out, and another Prairie town was dead. Many westerners see this new direction as being symbolized by the withdrawal of Crow, by variable rates, and by further branch line abandonments. No one should kid themselves about the effects of this Bill and the effects of the elimination of Crow. It means more rail line abandonment and more decimation of small communities. That will be the effect of this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Many westerners see this as one more devastating blow to their cherished way of life, to the way that they and their parents built their lives. Some will say it is inevitable anyway.