

Western Grain Transportation Act

Members of the NDP will have to go to their prairie producers and try to defend this action but they will not be able to so. You can see what is happening by now in the polls, and it is no wonder, when you consider the way the New Democratic Party has operated in this House on this Bill.

Let us look at Clause 29 of the Bill. The NDP is trying to amend that clause through Motion No. 50. You will find that in committee the Hon. Member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer) moved a clause that would provide verification of railway investments of the \$651 million. That clause was substantially amended by this Party and agreed to by all sides of the House.

The NDP now comes forward and says that we should have restrictions under Motion No. 50 that in effect would allow the railroads to have after tax constant cost portion of payments allowed for the movement of grain. That is very difficult to support. I agree the railroads have not been very good in expending moneys voted by this Parliament in the manner in which we voted them; for example, for branch line upgrading. Many Members have stood in this House and put forward examples of how moneys have been voted for branch lines and nothing has been done with those branch lines.

It is important that we have verification of investment by railways. This amendment says that the Canadian Transport Commission will have the ability to look at past expenditures and decide whether they have been made in relation to the movement of grain. It will then be able to give a report to the Minister. I have great difficulty in being concerned about confidentiality as far as the railroads are concerned.

At the time we got into branch line difficulties the railroads were saying they were not making any money moving grain from branch lines, yet at the same time the railroads were running on those branch lines moving fuels, lumber, hardware and produce into those farm communities. Then they got into the trucking business. They found that the profits, of course, were greater by truck than by rail along the branch lines. Immediately there was an end to investment in the branch lines, despite the fact the grain had to go out by rail. That is why I have so much concern and difficulty understanding this need for confidentiality.

In Motions Nos. 52 and 53 we are proposing that there is no need for confidentiality as far as the information being requested from the railroads is concerned. In fact, most of the information that would be secured would be about investments made in the past, and would probably be in the annual reports of the companies at any rate.

My second, concern is whether or not the money involved in the \$658 million proposal will be spent in an adequate fashion. That money is taxpayers' money. The information about how it is intended that that money be spent should be available to the taxpayers. Therefore, there is no need to have Clause 29(5) in the Bill, which reads:

The members of the Committee shall treat in a confidential manner any information submitted under this section that is identified and treated as confidential by the railway company that submitted the information.

That information ought to be made available to the public.

I always have a little laugh about the railway's concern about competition. In my area there is only one railroad. There is no other railroad competing. The railroad has control over most of the trucking companies that run into those areas. Very few other trucking companies can compete. I have great difficulty in being concerned about the corporate confidentiality of investments in those areas where there is a monopoly. Even if that line were not a grain related line with a federal subsidy going to it, I would still have some difficulty supporting a clause like that. But when this relates to a grain carrying line, whether or not it is supported by direct investment from the Canadian public, then I have a great deal of difficulty in supporting that clause. That is why I strongly support the motions put forward to delete that clause from this Bill. Hon. Members should consider carefully which of the two amendments they should support. I suggest they preferably support ours because it appears first on the Order Paper.

● (1850)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell).

An Hon. Member: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The situation is difficult for the Chair. Apparently Hon. Members are outwaiting one another—

Mr. Waddell: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker):—in due course I will put the question.

Mr. Anguish: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It seems in terms of Hon. Members who are rising to speak that they are playing the cat and mouse game. I appreciate the fact that Members of the Conservative Party moved us into extended hours because there are many motions. With time allocation placed on us by the Government, it does not seem that we will be able to deal with many of the important motions we would like to cover.

In light of that fact, and coming directly to my point of order, if it is important for other Parties in the House of Commons, not just the New Democratic Party, to see the Bill disposed of, we would like the Chair to seek the unanimous consent of the House, in keeping with the spirit of covering adequately all the amendments and motions, to remove the ten-minute limit on speeches. Hon. Members could then fully express their concerns about the various motions they want to cover this evening. Would the Chair seek unanimous consent of the House to dispose of the ten-minute time limit and seek either a 20-minute limitation or, more preferably, remove the limitation on the length of time Hon. Members can speak on any motion with which we are dealing during the extended hours?

It is uncertain as to when the extended hours will cease. I imagine they will cease when no more Members rise in their places or when we have covered all the motions with which we