

Western Grain Transportation Act

The unfortunate result of the direction the Minister of Transport has followed has been that he has played producer against producer. He has played the wheat and grain producer against the cattle producer. Certainly we understand, as primary producers ourselves, that the cattlemen of western Canada have suffered some very severe problems. The grain producer is suffering a tremendous challenge in terms of the costs of production as well. The commodity groups are involved in the situation. With one blow the Minister is trying to solve a number of very complex problems which will not be solved that simply. It must be brought to his attention that he must not destroy what has been accomplished.

It is significant to note that in my riding of Assiniboia the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Trudeau) announced, at Fillmore, Saskatchewan, a program to double-track the railroad clean from Winnipeg to Vancouver. It was interesting to note that the railroad men following that announcement, were literally suggesting that because many trains had been taken off the track with regard to passengers and so on, in many areas this simply was a political manoeuvre.

Mr. Pepin: It is being done now.

Mr. Gustafson: We in the Conservative Party understand that there are congested areas, but the Government has not addressed those problems. It must take a positive position in solving those problems and those bottlenecks which are there. In Bill C-155 there is absolutely no guarantee, Mr. Speaker, that the Government is going to address in a position way the problems and the bottlenecks which exist in the system. It has only played politics.

We must strengthen the position of the primary producer. We must give him an opportunity to do and continue to do for Canada what he has done up to this point, in producing \$6 billion worth of exports, which has been one bright spot. The people in the energy field did the same thing until the Government climbed on their backs and made them ineffective, and we will possibly see the results of that for many years. We must turn this around. Certainly our Party will look objectively at building a transportation system which will be unequalled anywhere in the world. We must get around the snowslides, we must deal with the congestion at the ports, and we must deal with other places where double-tracking is absolutely necessary. However, to make a political football out of these problems is unfair to the producer.

The statutory Crow rate is so important. As the Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) has said time and time again, it is the Magna Carta of western Canada. Because of the tremendous distances we must face in transportation, the Government must look objectively at how it can strengthen the system without destroying the producer. If the producer is destroyed, Mr. Speaker, I say through you to the Minister that it will have the same impact upon this Canada of ours as we suffered in the past year and a half when the Government laid our energy people flat on their backs, imported oil from Mexico, disregarded increased prices, said in this House that it was not going to increase fuel prices beyond

18 cents a gallon, and later we saw an increase of \$1 a gallon on fuel costs. This is the kind of direction which has been followed. We must avoid that, and we can avoid it. We must not play producer against producer. We must not play commodity group against commodity group.

I would suggest to the Minister that it is most important that he bring the railroads into accountability, and that he lay out purely and simply to the producers of Canada, and to all the people of Canada, the importance of this debate which the Government is trying to obstruct in this House. I cannot repeat too often the importance of the direction to be followed which will produce positive results in the improvement of the export market and will lead to a brighter day for the economy of this great country of ours, Canada.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I enter into this debate again. In my previous remarks I went over some very essential points about which I believe the farmers and, indeed, the people of Saskatchewan, are greatly concerned. The first point was that under the proposed legislation some \$600 million to \$1 billion annually will be taken out of the Saskatchewan economy. That is something which the Saskatchewan economy just cannot stand. It comes close to \$600 to \$1,000 purchasing power for every man, woman, and child in Saskatchewan which just will not be there. The effects, therefore, will not only be felt by the farmers but will also be felt by the retail sector and by the workers in Saskatchewan. In sum, Mr. Speaker, it means less jobs and less money to go around. For that reason, although there are many reasons, I stand totally opposed to the proposed legislation.

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The other argument I brought forward concerned my suspicions as to the \$650 million the Government claims is the Crow gap. I went through some of the figures Mr. Snavelly used and pointed out he allowed the railroads a rate of return on money they never invested on their own. These were public moneys invested in rail operations, moneys originally given to build the CPR. Yet Mr. Snavelly allowed the railroads a rate of return on those public moneys. That rate of return is included in this \$650 million Crow gap. If we are serious about examining the Crow rate, then we have to have some honest and real figures. My suggestion at that time was that we go back to square one and get some accurate figures as to what it really has cost the railroads to ship grain.

Mr. Pepin: The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool does not disagree.

Mr. de Jong: When I ran out of time the last time, I was trying to cover the area of subsidies. Other speakers have pointed out this morning that Canadian agriculture is not subsidized the way it is in the European Economic Community, Argentina, Australia or the United States. In fact, I wonder if the Government really has a handle on the amount of subsidies that farmers in other countries get. For example,