

ourselves not only what we should be doing regarding the Crow rate legislation, but also ask ourselves about the historic meaning of this legislation and its conventions as they affect the expectations for a minimum level of service.

This legislation was established to move grain from the Prairies to other parts of Canada and for export, and as a tool for economic development. I submit that those two principles should remain in the legislation today. If we deny the Hon. Member his amendment, we will have limited the ability of our producers to move grain effectively. It would also affect negatively the secondary industries in Alberta because the farmer can acquire his portion of the Crow rate benefit only if he exports. That kind of limitation, Sir, is unacceptable. However, it is an extremely dangerous one, not only in terms of the economy of the Province of Alberta, but also with regard to the spin-off ramifications for all of Canada.

● (1700)

I note that Your Honour is sending me the signal that my allotted time is up. I really wish I had more time to develop that particular point. However, I know there are other amendments related to that point and I can handle it at a later time. But that concept—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There does not appear to be unanimous consent.

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the amendment that has been put forth by my friend and colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), who represents a constituency neighbouring mine. I would like to bring attention once more to what I think is the crux of the whole problem, the crux of the amendment. At present, Clause 17(d) states:

—promote reciprocal and other arrangements between the railway companies to facilitate the efficient and reliable movement of grain for the purpose of maximizing returns to producers.

With the amendment, it would then read:

—promote and shall require, if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements between the railway companies to facilitate the efficient and reliable movement of grain for the purposes of maximizing returns to producers.

I will not debate the matter, but the Government is proposing to transfer \$1 billion a year over the next three years, directly to the railroads with no strings attached, except for these kinds of statements, with no onus on the railroads to become accountable to the producer or to the Government which, in its largesse, is handing over this amount of \$1 billion.

All that the Hon. Member for Vegreville is doing is putting in three key words, “and shall require”. The amendment shall

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require the railroads to follow through to reciprocal arrangements with other transport carriers within the country. Surely that is not too much to ask when one considers that the taxpayers are transferring to the railroads \$1 billion a year for the next three years. In a sense, the \$1 billion a year is making the railroads accountable to the people who are supplying the money, making them accountable to Members of the House of Commons who, in turn, are accountable to their constituents and, in my case and that of all western Members responsible to producers within their ridings.

In effect, if the amendment goes through, we know that as soon as reciprocal arrangements are not made and transportation of the producers' crops is stifled, the pressure will be put on Members of Parliament from the West, from the producing areas, from the commodity areas, to do something about it. They, in turn, will come to the House because they will have a definite statement that states, “and shall require”. It is not a promotion saying, “Go out, railroads, and start a publicity campaign, a hot air campaign”, but words in effect saying, “Yes, we are doing this”. However, it states, “and shall require”, which would make it mandatory. It will place it under the scrutiny of Members of Parliament who are responsible to their constituents, and would indeed put it under the scrutiny of those in the Government benches who will also feel the pressure, which will indeed force the railroads to do what they say they will do.

I do not know if Members on the Government side understand. I can say without fear of contradiction that the Conservative Members of Parliament are the ones who represent producers in western Canada. I do not know if the Liberals understand that the very lifeblood of the producer is on the line. It is being put on the line with the transfer of tax dollars, which the producer would also contribute, directly to the railroads, \$1 billion a year with no strings attached.

We have had experience with railroads which have stated that they would maintain branchlines in all of the communities, and we have seen what has happened. We have heard the railroads promise that they would maintain passenger traffic from Edmonton, Alberta, right through to Vancouver but, indeed, they have cut off service to the severe detriment of an area represented by the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor).

Jasper dropped 60 per cent of its tourist traffic because the railroads were not compelled by legislation to keep the lines open for passenger service. We have continually seen the railroads lobbying all Members of Parliament, the House of Commons and the Government, pleading their case, stating that they cannot continually operate the railroads and provide services to those very prairie towns for which we are giving them \$1 billion to move commodities from. If we do not allow the amendment to go through, we will be giving them carte blanche permission to withdraw or to do exactly as they please, and requiring nothing. I am saying that three simple words, “and shall require”, change the clout of the legislation, if it does indeed pass. It would then be mandatory that those railroads do what they say they will do, and live up to their