

Western Grain Transportation Act

With the 76 Members who come from western Canada, between Manitoba and British Columbia, and with the 650 minutes which have been allocated so far, it is a total of 8.5 minutes in which they have the opportunity to speak. For the 48 Members who come from Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, they have the grand total, if they try to exercise it collectively, of 13.5 minutes. And if you had 281 Members, with the Speaker in the chair, and the 650 minutes which we have so far been allocated, with one more day in the offing, we would have the grand total of 2.3 minutes per Member.

I echo what has been expressed on this side of the House that this is a black day. It should have been done on Friday the thirteenth because the Government would have been more exposed to odium. It is going to come back to haunt it. I do not honestly believe the Minister of Transport, (Mr. Pepin), as the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), said in his opening speech and repeated today, has had the capacity to hear wounds and redress the problems and to recognize that there are legitimate regional grievances. There are legitimate grievances and legitimate differences of opinion in this country. One does not redress that imbalance and one does not show equity or fairness, Mr. Speaker, by acting unilaterally.

My closing words are specifically directed to the Chair, who I know is an honoured Member from Atlantic Canada. If there is any warning I can give to anyone about the Crow and the future with Bill C-155, and my friend, the Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) expressed the fears and concerns of eastern agriculture in Atlantic Canada—I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to others across this country, that we in the East have had the sad example of the maritime freight rates, which was our Magna Carta back in the 1920s, to guarantee access to markets and to help our industry within the region. You know, Mr. Speaker, as well as I do, what has happened to that. Therefore, beware, Mr. Speaker, and I tell the Minister to beware. Let us have some sense on the Government side and let the balance be restored. Put the shoe on the other foot and see how you would like such a unilateral and negative act to take place against you such as has taken place here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Questions, comments? Debate.

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg-Assiniboine): Mr. Speaker, it is a little rough to have to follow my friend, the Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley-Hants (Mr. Nowlan), but I will try to make a contribution here. It is unfortunate that the cameras are not also on the Minister this afternoon so the Canadian people can see how he is sinking in his chair with his head down, carrying the load, being made a scapegoat for the Liberal Party, and being taken in once again by the Quebec Liberal caucus.

I have had experience before, being from Winnipeg, of how the Quebec Liberal caucus operates. There was a recommendation made that an aerospace training centre be built in Winnipeg, but Members of the Quebec Liberal caucus got involved in that. They stated that it would be built in Montreal

or it would not be built at all. We see them in action again today. The Crow rate change will be done their way or it will not be done at all.

I have very little respect for most Members of the Cabinet. I had some respect for this Minister, but I certainly have lost it with his action here today in going along with what the Minister of Agriculture has proposed. It is unbelievable, from the figures which the Hon. Member for Annapolis Valley-Hants gave today, that we have only had 650 minutes of debate. I do not understand it in terms of the quality of debate of the Hon. Members from Saskatchewan and Alberta, who made excellent suggestions, alternatives and recommendations. And all of this has gone down the drain. There was not a lot of negative criticism of the Crow. It was constructive criticism, and I do not understand why the Minister would not take the time to listen to it. He could learn something. The Conservative Party has unveiled a ten-point agricultural program which my hon. friend from Vegreville put out early in April. It called upon the Liberal Government to implement immediately a ten-point agricultural program to aid in economic recovery for Canadian producers. The program developed by the PC agricultural caucus would provide up to \$100 million to assist producers in negotiating their existing high interest loans to levels more in line with current rates. On and on we went with our ten points.

I have a small rural area in my riding. It is called Headingley, Mr. Speaker. I received a letter from a number of farmers in that area. I would just like to read into the record their concerns about the intention of the Liberals to change the grain freight rate. The letter states:

● (1750)

Farmers cannot afford a change because grain prices are going down, not up as they should be. The only prices that are increasing are that of gas, diesel fuel and oil.

These are all Liberal taxes which have been placed on the farmer and other Canadians through the disastrous National Energy Program. As if that were not bad enough, the Crow is being rammed through under closure. The letter continues:

Also, taxes are increasing and the cost of insurance, machinery and hired help is up.

Of course, that is partly due to the NDP Government in Manitoba. Additional taxes, employees' taxes and others, are being imposed upon the business community in Manitoba by the NDP Government. The farmer from Headingley goes on to write:

Why do farmers in France and Germany get \$11 per bushel of wheat and pay no freight, only the cost to haul to the elevator?

Why can we not have the same arrangement here? The letter continues:

Canadians should not have to pay freight charges because farmers own half the hopper cars. Railway companies get the land free, diesels are rented and tracks are completely depreciated. What does the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport think they are pulling off? Our freight rates should go down, not up. If they cannot operate with the money they now receive, then give the tracks to the farmers. I am sure they can do a much better job.