

Western Grain Transportation Act

Member's present amendment really moves against the intent of the Bill.

I find it somewhat strange that this amendment comes from a Party whose Leader is going across the country wanting to restore free enterprise. The same Party brings in amendments to manage the affairs of CP and CN; it almost wants to manage the affairs of private companies. It is difficult to understand why this amendment would come from the Conservative Party. I could understand if it came from the New Democratic Party but not from the Progressive Conservative Party.

The clause, as it now stands, allows the railways to enter into reciprocal arrangements facilitated by the Administrator, but the amendment of the mover would authorize the GTA to demand that the companies enter into reciprocal arrangements. I thought these were the powers vested in the CTC. Is the Hon. Member telling us that he wants the GTA to have greater power than the CTC? I do not think so.

I thought the Hon. Member would withdraw this amendment if he thought it through carefully. He said that legal counsel advised that the clause was not necessary. If the clause is not necessary, legal counsel should have advised the Hon. Member to delete the clause, not bring in amendments. If the clause is not necessary, the advice should have been to delete it, not amend it.

Our legal counsel told us that this amendment would contravene a basic tenet of the Railway Act under which the railways are free to enter into traffic, commercial and operating arrangements, with the Government agency acting as arbitrator. Under this amendment the Government agency would impose an arrangement and establish conditions. If we force two or more parties into an arrangement and they do not really want to honour it, they will not honour it. If the Administrator can promote the parties coming into an arrangement, then I think they will honour it.

I think the wording as it is is far superior to what the Hon. Member is trying to bring in. The Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydminster (Mr. McKnight) was a little worried because the railways might "make a buck". Again I find that strange coming from a Party which is promoting free enterprise and competition. What is wrong with companies wanting to make a buck if these additional dollars are reinvested in the transportation system to give us a first-class transportation system for the movement of grain and other commodities?

A witness appeared before the committee who said that when countries like Japan buy goods from Canada, one of the things they check into is whether Canada will be able to deliver that product to port and to their country on time and in good condition. If we have a first-class transportation system, which is what the Bill wants to provide over the next decade, then Pacific Rim countries will buy more from Canada and will want to trade more with Canada.

The Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) asked why the railways did not go into reciprocal arrangements now. I think that up until now it has not been profitable for the

railways to move grain. Therefore, they wanted no part of transporting grain. They preferred that another railway system would take over. Under this Bill it will be profitable to move grain just as it is profitable to move coal, sulphur and other products. These profits will be reinvested in the system.

● (1240)

We know that over the next decade CN and CP will be investing \$16.5 billion. Translated into jobs, this means 375,000 person-years of work. Every day in Question Period Opposition Parties demand that the Government do something about creating long-term jobs. What better program or what better investment for creating jobs than Bill C-155?

Many witnesses told us the Bill was not perfect. It is a complicated Bill. Some groups wanted these amendments, some groups wanted others. However, the majority of the witnesses told the committee to get on with it because it is good for the economy of the country, because it will create that many jobs.

I appeal to both Parties to call the question and get on with this Bill. I have stated our reasons why we cannot support this amendment. Let us not waste time in this House as there are too many unemployed people in Canada who are waiting for this Bill.

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to speak following the Parliamentary Secretary. In fact, it is interesting to speak following any Government Member because none of them has seen fit to get up and speak very often to defend this Bill and make the case for the position they have taken. Therefore, I am pleased to have this opportunity.

I am disappointed that we have not heard from the Chief Government Whip on this Bill. He is a very straightforward gentleman. I have had the opportunity to sit with him on the Transport Committee many times. His position, knowledge and experience is long standing and will be very useful as far as the railways are concerned. Therefore, I would know his position on this amendment.

I want to deal with some of the concerns addressed by the Parliamentary Secretary. He talked about this Party being inconsistent in the sense that it should not be moving an amendment like this when our Leader talks about free enterprise. I should not have to remind him that it was the same Parliamentary Secretary at committee who turned down our freedom of choice amendment which would have given rise to some options within free enterprise. It would have put some of the decision-making power in the hands of the individual producers in this country. If he had wanted to do something beside speaking out of both sides of his mouth, he would have taken a consistent position at committee.

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. While the Member is continuing his remarks, will he explain to this Chamber whether this freedom of choice means retaining the Crow rate?