

Supply

When the committee made the recommendation to do away with the grain transportation agency that was one of the wisest recommendations that committee has probably ever made, and it has been followed up on.

The survival of the rail industry is critical to Canada, the minister continued, but it cannot be a survival at any cost. The industry must reinvent itself. How can the industry reinvent itself when we have had increased technology over the last 30 years that never has been really used or has had any effect on increasing the efficiency of this transportation system?

How can this railway system reinvent itself when it costs the railways \$6,000 to \$7,000 more in just fuel taxes from Toronto to Vancouver than it would take for the same distance in the United States? The government needs these funds and I do not think it is willing to sacrifice them to become more efficient in the rail system. It will have to take place somehow.

What the minister means by reinventing the system is not very clear to me. That is one place where we need transparency. I do not think we can run hopper cars without wheels and make them more efficient.

The other thing I would like to stress, and it was a very important point that the minister brought forward, is that rail has more than 200 separate kinds of actions or decisions that must be approved by the National Transportation Agency. Why are those regulations there? Why has government allowed them to be put in place. It was mostly through lobbying of provincial governments, special interest groups and not by farmers I can guarantee that.

He goes on to say on the following page, and it is almost unbelievable that one would know about these things and not do anything, that in Canada the approval process for conveyance can take up to six months. In the United States approvals are granted in a few days.

I think the minister and the government do know what is happening in the transportation system and they do know what the answers or the solutions are, but the political will has not been shown. It amazes me when I see some of the provinces leading the way in some of this reregulation or deregulation of the transportation system.

Manitoba and Nova Scotia have already taken off some of the property taxes and fuel taxes to the railways to help the system become more efficient and productive. Why can the federal government not make simple legislation in this House to help along some of the provincial initiatives?

Regarding the port of Churchill, when we read about the fumbling and the bungling of the issue of Churchill it always amazes me why there is a port there at all. Here we have a salt water port that would be the envy of the world and every government since the 1970s has either tried to destroy it or

somehow put it in a light indicating that it is not effective or efficient.

I hope my input into this question is encouraging this government somewhat to take some action. Inaction is definitely there and transparency can be taken as clear or unclear.

• (1355)

Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague's speech. With some of the negotiation currently going on between CN and CP there is a possibility that CP may well take over some of CN's track system in the maritimes.

This may be a little thing but there is one thing that bothers me and I wonder if the member could comment. CP changed its logo some time ago and it shows the Canadian flag sort of unfurling and becoming the American flag. I find that very offensive.

In view of the fact that so many Canadians have subsidized and paid for the rail tracking system in the maritimes and east of Winnipeg, I wonder if the member could comment on the appropriateness of having that logo shown over the track system that Canadian taxpayers paid for.

Second, the member talked about infrastructure and the concern for roads in his area. I suggest that the infrastructure spending program and projects, although not directly related to this debate, are selected by the municipality. Therefore, I do not think it is a very fair comment by the member to criticize the federal government. He should really be talking to the municipal politicians.

Third and most important, I listened to the previous member from the Reform Party talk about privatization and I hear this member's concerns about rail abandonment. These seem to be in conflict.

I wonder if the member could explain the abandonment of rail lines in his riding where it is not economically viable.

Mr. Hoepfner: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I can answer all the questions because I do not know if I can keep track of them.

I think the first one had to do with the logo. If I were to put a logo on the CPR, I would call it the sleepy R. I think that would appeal to every farmer in western Canada. I think it is only because of a lack of scrutiny by the previous government that the Western Grain Transportation Act was implemented which gave the railways almost a licence to print money. By having those huge subsidies they were able to expand into the U.S. which they would not have been able to do with some ordinary transportation policy.

When it comes to criticizing the infrastructure program, I just want to ask the member why the ministers on the Liberal side or the people involved with the infrastructure program under the human resources development portfolio seem to get twice the money for their constituencies than any other constituency. This