

tedious work. Their work has been well done and the people in my area want me to pay them the most sincere compliment.

I also wish to compliment the Chairman of the Committee. I have worked with him in the past and I know he is a very fair and capable individual. I know from the comments I have had from my colleagues who served on the Committee that they were very pleased with his chairmanship, and I just want to relay that message to him.

As far as I am concerned, this amendment we are dealing with today is probably one of the most significant amendments to this particular piece of legislation as it relates to the people of the Peace country. The reason is simple. We are in a unique situation in our part of the country. We have large pockets of farming population that simply do not have rail lines in the immediate area. The Canadian national average is something like 20 miles. For every farmer to move his grain from his fields, his farm, into the elevators, he has to transport it about 20 miles. In my area I have several people who have to transport their grain something like 120 miles, six times the national average. Obviously, this is six times the cost to those individual farmers who are already dealing with very high costs because of the region of the country in which they live.

● (1140)

I am shocked and stunned that the New Democratic Party can put forward an amendment such as this and have us believe that it is in the interests of producers. It is incredible because the very people hurt by this amendment are none other than the producers, in particular the producers of the Peace country. Clause 17(4), as it presently stands, reads:

The Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may enter into agreements to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport where, in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers.

There are two parts of that clause which I really like. One is "in the best interests of the grain producers", and the second is the whole business of "the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport". I think this is significant, as a Member of Parliament representing that part of the country. It is the only means of transportation in much of my riding simply because we do not have rail lines. Now the NDP is saying that we should do away with trucking not allow it to exist in the system. The NDP is saying that we should not allow the Minister or the Administrator to make a payment to farmers who have to truck their grain 120 miles.

**Mr. Kristiansen:** Why don't we just build a railway?

**Mr. Cooper:** I hear the Hon. Member. That is a wonderful solution, I really appreciate it. I wish he would sit down with the Minister and convince him of that. He knows as well as I that that is not a viable solution or possibility at this point. We would love it to happen. We are working toward it, but we know that in the short term we have to have some form of trucking subsidy for our farmers. This amendment will simply not allow it.

We have been fighting for the particular concerns of this area for a long time. My predecessor, Ged Baldwin, worked

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for years to bring to the attention of the Government across the way the concerns of our farmers in terms of the difficulties they face in grain transportation. We worked hard to bring that to the Government's attention. When there was a change in administration in 1979, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) worked very hard for our region and was making some progress. In a very short period of time we would have seen an off-line elevator concept which would have met the needs of those people. Now, because of the NDP-Leberal coalition, that has been eliminated. The NDP wants to go even further and eliminate the possibility of those farmers ever receiving any kind of help with a very expensive proposition they virtually face every day of their farming lives.

The whole purpose of looking at the Bill was to look after the concerns and difficulties of producers. Of course, Members of the New Democratic Party have pretended to be the great champions of those people, but I would like to know who they are representing with this amendment. It sounds to me as if it is the people in Regina, central Edmonton or perhaps even Winnipeg. It is certainly not the farmers, especially those in the Peace country. Those farmers need recognition for the difficulties they face because of the uniqueness of that particular region of Canada.

The region to which I refer is one of much potential and opportunity. We have literally thousands of agricultural acres which are not in production. They could be and will be brought into production when it becomes feasible to develop the land and the costs of production become a viable option. The only way we could see that happening would be if we allowed some kind of recognition of the unique difficulties faced by these people.

This particular amendment is a totally regressive motion, a backward movement rather than a forward one. I speak in the strongest possible terms against it. The present wording in the Bill is important because it recognizes the unique needs of the people of the Peace country. I will vote against this motion with the greatest of pleasure.

**Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to enter this debate and to talk a little sense after the words of the previous speaker. I support this NDP amendment.

**An Hon. Member:** How many grain farmers do you have?

**Ms. McDonald:** It is true that I do not have a large number of farmers in my riding. There are certainly a large number of ex-farmers and a large number of garden plots. That is an important question. We have excellent fruit markets and vegetable markets. We are not high in agriculture, but I want to address the system.

Certainly the people in my riding are concerned about transportation policy, agricultural policy and about having an efficient system which works equitably for all concerned and is fair to producers. Many people in my riding are former farmers and producers. They are sympathetic, and I am certain they very much favour my speaking on behalf of the