

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.

Hon. Members of the NDP want to delete that portion from the Bill and lock the farmer into hauling grain by rail and by rail alone.

If we could ultimately design a system in the country that was ideal, I believe that most farmers from the Prairies, and probably from any country of the world that sells grain, would ideally like to move grain by rail. Of course, the ideal situation does not and cannot occur.

Literally millions of bushels of grain have been moved from Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan by truck over the last number of years. That grain has been transported by truck primarily because farmers have felt that in many cases the railways have not done a good enough job. Farmers have to keep money for their own needs and to use for cash flow within their own farms. If the railways were not going to move their grain, then some other method had to be found. Of course, that method was trucking.

Many farmers began to haul grain by truck because they had no other choice, and if you look at those farmers now, Mr. Speaker, you will see that almost without exception they are in a better financial position than the farmers who sat back and, as many of the Members of the NDP would like us to believe, did nothing but cry, complain and scream. The farmers who were aggressive and found a way to move their grain by truck are now in a better cashflow position and a better financial position than are the farmers who were not aggressive.

The history of the whole question of trucking goes back some years to the Hall Commission Report which has been mentioned by other Hon. Members in the House today. Members of the NDP have described this as the Magna Carta of western Canada. The Hall Commission Report contains Mr. Justice Hall's recommendations for the establishment of a grain handling system on the Prairies.

In those recommendations, Mr. Justice Hall very wisely recognized that in a perfect world, we would all like to move our grain by rail. However, the situation is not perfect and never has been. The report dealt with the many small communities on the Prairies that, because of isolation, topography and a number of other factors, could not support a rail service but were perhaps able to support another method by which grain would be delivered to the local elevator thereby keeping that particular community viable. From that point, grain would be trucked to an elevator on a main line with a higher throughput which could move greater volumes of grain than by other methods.

● (1600)

This idea of hybridization between truck and rail would make sense. Judge Hall came out clearly in favour of it. At that time it was called the off-line elevator concept, and the Conservative Party was giving consideration to establishing it in the very area recommended by Judge Hall, Fisher Branch, in the central part of the Province. Because of the location and

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the facilities and the grain production in the area, however, it was judged that a rail link with that particular community would no longer be viable. Judge Hall said that there should be an off-line elevator-trucking experiment. Grain within 40 or 50 miles of the elevator could be brought in more cheaply and efficiently by truck than by running half empty rail cars over a line that would cost millions and millions of dollars to upgrade. It would also keep Fisher Branch as a viable marketing community. If this motion were accepted, we would not be able to have trucking supplement movement by rail.

I come from a part of Manitoba that has a long history of trucking. In southern Manitoba all kinds of grain has been trucked fairly long distances for a number of years. Most of the trucking was done by very small firms. If this motion were passed, again the NDP would lock out the very people they claim to support in the House of Commons, the small businessman and the small firms. Most of the trucking in southern Manitoba is done by the small trucking companies, using semi-trailers.

There has been very little damage to the road system in southern Manitoba because the people who operate the trucks, the small independents, operate according to the weight and other regulations set down by the Government of Manitoba. The local area benefits because the truckers buy their fuel, oil, meals and have repairs done, in the local communities. We all know that this is not the case with the railways. A trucking program brings many benefits. I do not speak of a trucking program that would do away with the railways, because that is impossible and impractical, nor a trucking program that would establish five or eight or ten large inland terminals on the Prairies, because we all know that will not happen either. Anyone who raises that spectre is being dishonest with the producers of western Canada. I speak of a trucking program that would supplement, where needed, the movement of grain to the main lines and allow the railways to move fully loaded hopper cars in unitrains, perhaps, or certainly in large numbers to Vancouver or Thunder Bay.

This amendment should be defeated, Mr. Speaker. It is a foolish amendment, ill-thought out, proposed by a Party that is trying desperately to cling to the past.

● (1600)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 45, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the Hon. Member for Mission-Port Moody (Mr. St. Germain)—Employment—Request that Government disclose plans. (b) Need for long-term jobs; The Hon. Member for Surrey-white Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen)—The Adminis-