

Western Grain Transportation Act

that, but no, I do not believe the Government is capable of learning anything.

For many years, long before I ever came to the House, I have been puzzled and have wondered why the Government was forever setting up royal commissions, non-royal commissions, task forces, etc. to study things. These commissions would travel the country and spend zillions of dollars and they would sometimes present very good reports. The Government would ignore those reports, or if the Government did not like the recommendations, it would set up another study. I understand that in European circles this is known as the Canadian solution. If you do not want to face something, study it. I do not think we should tar all Canadians with that dirty brush; we should call it the Liberal Canadian solution.

● (1210)

That has been the Government's approach to the whole question of grain handling and the Crow issue. Not the first but easily the most comprehensive and the most balanced study was the one done by Mr. Justice Emmett Hall. He was a prominent Conservative hired by a Liberal Government who reached New Democratic conclusions. One would have thought that this would be enough to accord his study the overwhelming support of all political Parties.

But, no! He started from the premise of maintaining the Crowsnest Pass rate for farmers and working from there to solve the other problems. The Liberals and Tories had already decided to start by scrapping those rates for farmers. So the one study that solicited farmers' opinions, listened to farmers' opinions and reflected them in its report and its recommendations was thrown in the waste pile by past Liberal Governments and by the Conservative Government during its short sojourn in power in 1979.

After Hall there was the Snavely study which looked at things from a strictly economic or Harvard business school point of view, virtually ignoring any social, cultural or historic criteria. That was an approach totally unacceptable to western farmers.

Last summer, fed up with studies that provided recommendations that it did not like, the Department of Transport puts its own package together. It hired a commissioner in Professor Gilson who, it felt, would bring in a report that reflected the Department's package. Surprise, surprise—Gilson did that. The Gilson study was a sham. The Department had already decided what it wanted. I wonder if Professor Gilson realized that he was being used, that he had been conned by the Department of Transport.

Even the Prime Minister was conned. In the House he said that no changes would be made to the Crow unless there was widespread consensus in western Canada on whether and how to do so. Later when he stood in the House and defended the Pepin-Gilson proposals I think he actually believed that there was consensus. Even he had been conned. It must have been quite a surprise to him when he found that the prairie opposition to the Pepin-Gilson proposals was matched by the opposition of farmers in his own Province, the strongest of Liberal bastions. He had better keep looking over his shoulder; there

may well be a number of Quebec Members of Parliament who may go the way of the late, great Otto Lang.

Perhaps we have come to the real reason for the closure motion being withdrawn—opposition from the Liberal caucus. If anyone wants to know how much consensus there is on these proposals, how popular the Pepin-Gilson proposals are on the Prairies, I suggest they ask the Minister of Transport about the warm welcome given him by Saskatchewan farmers when he visited the Legislature of that Province a month or two ago.

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity, however short, to participate in the debate. I should like to comment that Members of the NDP are up to their old tricks again, trying to get back into the debate on the Crow by attacking the Conservatives. They spend half their time worrying about the Conservatives. They are the great defenders of everything and indeed nothing.

I should like the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and his colleagues to remember what things were like a year ago when interest rates on mortgages that people held on their homes accelerated to such a degree that there was a march on the House of Commons by people demanding action by Members. That was because interest rates had increased mortgage payments on their homes by 100 per cent. Do Members of the Government realize that by 1990 transportation costs to western producers of grain will be increased by 400 per cent? What are we doing to this country of ours that is supposed to believe in equality of opportunity for all?

The agricultural industry produces wealth from the ground which is converted into money. It contributes \$6 billion per year to our balance of payments position. This is basically what we ship across the country.

The farmers' input costs have increased dramatically. The Government fails to recognize that all the various charges under the National Energy Program that feed \$1 billion per year to companies like PetroCan find their way into input costs. As well, recognizing that commodity prices are going down, that all across the country farmers are going bankrupt and nothing is being done about it, the Government brings in a Bill to change the statutory freight rate to the point where the farmer will not be able to survive. This is clearly the most important thing that has hit the country for years.

I should like to invite the Minister of Transport to northern Alberta, an area where farmers do not even have a small country elevator. From the beginning farmers have trucked their grain from 60 to 100 miles to the nearest branch line terminal. He should read some of the letters that farmers write to me.

I would point out to the Minister that I do not ask a farmer whether he can deliver a Conservative vote if I am to stand here and defend his rights; I do not ask him if he can deliver a Liberal vote if I am to stand up and protect his rights. In Alberta, however, the Prime Minister faced the producers by saying; "I know this Bill on the statutory Crow rate is not a proper Bill, I know it is not economically sound, but you people