

Transportation

—obviously they (federal government) wish to have the matter debated and for that I do not criticize them. I think that the issues involved should be better known. I think that there are, clearly, as I indicate, a number of issues involved. Perhaps a revision of the deal makes sense—

That is precisely what the Premier of Saskatchewan said on January 10, 1982, that “—perhaps a revision of the deal makes sense.” Therefore, I do not understand why the NDP to my left takes such great exception to what the minister is doing.

There is more. An interview with Premier Blakeney was printed in the January issue of *Business Life* on pages 22 and 23. I will read part of that into the record to further question why the NDP federally is not going along with the Saskatchewan NDP. The hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo) quoted Mr. Blakeney, and I will quote what premier Blakeney said in this interview. He said:

But the perception of our government really is that the farmers ought to keep the benefit of the Crow rate.

The NDP and the Farmer's Union make big mileage out of the difference between the benefit of the Crow rate and the Crow rate. Here, the Premier of Saskatchewan is saying that the farmers should keep the benefit of the Crow. The premier goes on to say:

If we want to address the issue of who is to pay the additional compensation to the railways, we are prepared to address that issue.

I think most members would agree that the compensation should come from the federal government. The premier goes on, and this is interesting because he says:

We make one other narrow point: in this discussion it is very important to distinguish between the current level of the Crow rate and the principle of having a statutory rate.

He does not say “the present statutory rate”, he says “a statutory rate”. To me, that clearly means a new statutory rate. This is precisely what the minister is doing.

Again, I find it difficult to understand why the NDP is not getting up and applauding the minister for his actions, because he is doing precisely what Premier Blakeney has suggested he do during the last three or four months.

There is more, Mr. Speaker. He said:

Some people take the position that there ought not to be a rate for the movement of grain set by the Government of Canada. With that position we are absolutely and unalterably in opposition.

I think we agree with that. It is interesting that the NDP attacks this party for not having a position, but clearly when the main spokesman for the NDP is Premier Blakeney in Saskatchewan—and I think that the federal NDP would agree with that—and he is on record as saying on three different occasions that he agrees with what the Minister of Finance is doing, it boggles my mind as to why the NDP complains about what the minister is doing. The minister is doing precisely what the Premier of Saskatchewan has asked him to do. Members of the New Democratic Party had better make up their minds as to which way they are going and what position they are going to take. If they do not, perhaps the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) and the Premier of Saskatchewan should get together on that issue.

● (1630)

Mr. Kilgour: The Minister of Transport.

Mr. Mayer: The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin), excuse me. The Minister of Finance is another story.

I would like to talk about process, because it is important to understand what transportation is to western Canadians. It is the reason that part of the country was settled. It is part of our heritage. We are proud of it, and it is very recent to us. As I said, I lived on a farm in the middle of Saskatchewan. I do not consider myself a has-been or very old yet, but I had an opportunity to plough land for the first time ever with the use of modern machinery. That is how recent our history in western Canada is, and transportation is very much tied up with that history.

It has been mentioned several times in this debate—by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), a distinguished former minister of transport of this country, and by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton)—that transportation is more than simply moving goods around the country and doing it efficiently. It is part of our guts. It is almost a religion to us. If we want to be esoteric and academic about it, we could say it is metaphysical. The minister smiles, but I think he would agree with me because I heard him say in Winnipeg at his press conference that the way people in the west feel about transportation is similar to the way Quebecers feel about some of their cultural and language issues. If one can understand that, one can understand why we approach this revision of the Crow rate with such apprehension.

I would like to make a comparison. The hon. member for La Prairie (Mr. Deniger) spoke today. His total claim to the opportunity to speak about western transportation is the fact that his riding is called “La Prairie”. That is his sole claim. My riding is called “Portage-Marquette”, and my name is pronounced “Mayer” in French. I receive a certain amount of French mail in my office. I lament the fact that I cannot speak and write French as well as I should, having studied French at high school and university. Had I been a better student, I probably would understand French better. However, the minister is from Quebec, as is the hon. member for La Prairie who spoke today about issues affecting western Canada. His doing so is tantamount to the hon. member for Vegreville's going to the province of Quebec and talking about a new deal respecting language for Quebec. I could just imagine the hue and cry that would go out if that ever happened. Yet in many ways that is precisely what the Minister of Transport is doing so I urge him to understand the way we in western Canada feel as we approach this issue. I am sure he does in many ways, but he must understand the depth of feeling we have about this kind of issue.

It might be presumptuous on my part, but I submit that it is very difficult for one to understand that kind of feeling unless one grew up and lives in that part of the country. This is important. It is something which is inside us. It is the *raison d'être* of the west. We are in western Canada because of