

Western Grain Transportation Act

● (1250)

If they continue to do business the way they are doing it now, and that is as though they both existed in a separate country and did not co-operate, I do not suppose there is very much we can do. But if the railways could come to a situation where the principle of transportation would be to the nearest port by the shortest route, you could increase the capacity very substantially.

Perhaps that goes to the crux of the question. I suppose the existing Crow rate is not so very bad in comparison with the inefficiencies in the railway industry in this country. Perhaps this is an area to which this House could address itself in greater detail than it has over the past weeks and months. I am quite sure that once this has been done, the House and the Government would take a different view of the existing Crows-nest Pass rate.

I understand my time has expired, Mr. Speaker, so I will conclude my remarks.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, the amendment before us proposes to change Clause 17(d) at page 8 by removing the words "promote reciprocal and other arrangements" and inserting instead "and shall require, if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements". That seems like a very reasonable amendment. While it may be a little surprising to find the Tory Party advocating greater Government control of private enterprise, as in this case, that Party does have the option of going backwards and forwards at the same time. It is built right into the name "Progressive Conservative". That Party can switch back and forth very easily and say yes or no, or yes and no, without any embarrassment, but I hope it stays with this particular amendment because it does seem reasonable.

Presumably, the argument against this amendment would be that the railroads may already do this voluntarily. In fact, we understand they had an agreement to do this voluntarily. The problem is partly that the agreement is subject to cancellation on a month's notice and partly that there is no way for the interested public to monitor the performance of this agreement, nor in any sense to enforce the agreement to provide any compliance with the agreement. That is the nub of the question.

That is why it is so interesting to find the Conservatives pressed to admit that private enterprise would not be willing. That is the implication of the amendment. It must be compelled and required, because it would not be willing to do this in an efficient way on a voluntary basis. It clearly has the means to do it. The examples which were placed before the committee by Mr. Justice Emmett Hall were, of course, examples based on the record and practices of the railroads. The railroads know full well what inefficiency there was in conducting their business as they did.

As has been pointed out by the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), the railroad contradicts itself in complaining about the cost of hauling grain when it chooses to haul it for hundreds of miles unnecessarily. Obviously, the railroads are not essentially interested in efficient production. If inefficient operation will make money for them, then let there be inefficient operation. That is their philosophy. Anyone who uses

the rail service between Ottawa and Toronto is well aware that the railroad has no overriding sense of obligation to efficiency. It does not mind whether the train comes in late or not.

An Hon. Member: That is VIA Rail.

Mr. Heap: It is VIA Rail which, of course, is really only a function of the railroads and must take the railroads as it finds them. It must take the rolling stock as it finds it and must pay for worn out rolling stock as it finds it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I must caution the Hon. Member, as I have other Hon. Members, that he is straying somewhat from the amendment before the House.

Mr. Benjamin: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With all respect, Sir, surely examples of railways inefficiency, whether in the use of tracks or rolling stock, relate to the very points made in the amendment. The inefficiencies are caused by not having reciprocal agreements which could be required, if necessary. The same kind of reciprocal agreement needs to be required in many other places, including the line mentioned by my hon. friend. It relates to the point of the argument in this amendment.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I point out to you and Hon. Members in this House that the title of this Bill is:

An Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof.

I am not aware that VIA Rail in Ontario moves a heck of a lot of grain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I will give the Hon. Member, of course, the benefit of the doubt. However, I thought he was straying somewhat from the amendment before the House in his last remarks.

Mr. Heap: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do want to explain that while I accept your direction and will not pursue that particular detail further, I was trying to speak as an easterner who is aware of the over-all conduct of the railroads we are dealing with, which includes what is, in effect, their creature, VIA Rail. Of course, if I keep on being interrupted by Hon. Members I might get confused again and stray off the subject. If Hon. Members want this, they can continue in their present conduct.

I believe there could be another important value in—

Mr. Blais: Talk about the jobs which your filibuster is costing Toronto.

Mr. Heap: Even the Cabinet now wishes to get into the act, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if the Minister will speak to this amendment. I hope he will. Since the Minister opposite seems to want to comment, I hope he will have an opportunity to do so this afternoon.

The point I was trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that if the public Administrator had this power to require—not just to