

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

No. 35. On the one hand, the Liberal Party decided to give everything to the railroads and on the other hand, the NDP decided to stand in the way of any advancement whatsoever. I should like to make the position of this Party perfectly clear.

The situation of the primary producer in the wheat producing areas of the Prairies must be recognized. Certainly some rail lines have been abandoned. There are some people, however, who would suggest that more lines should be abandoned. I should like to put on record some of the work done by the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil). After an investigation, he recommended that 490 miles of line be placed in the permanent network up to the year 2000. He also recommended that 236 miles of line be frozen for five years pending the Hall recommendation to test the off-line elevator concept at Fisher Branch in Manitoba. This is basically what we are dealing with in Motion No. 34, which was debated yesterday, and in Motion No. 35, which was debated yesterday and today.

There is a good deal of confusion on the subject, Mr. Speaker. Apparently the Liberals are willing to give everything to the railroads, saying, "We cannot look at the position of the primary producer". The NDP, however, say, "We stand in the way of any advancement whatsoever". But this is the twentieth century, Mr. Speaker, and we have trucks that have 18 wheels under them. This Party would like to see better railroads and better roads and advancement in all areas of grain transportation. The result would be a better position for the primary producer.

Some Members of the NDP have said that the Conservative Party is all for rail line abandonment. I want to say to the NDP through you, Mr. Speaker, and to the producers, that no one has fought harder for the preservation of rail lines than the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw. At several hearings in my own riding we have made strong representations for the preservation of the rail lines. To disregard the suggestion that there might not be points where trucking would be useful for off-line elevators is irresponsible, and that is the position of the NDP.

It is probably no coincidence that newspaper headlines today show that the NDP has dropped to a new low of 14 per cent in the polls. That is a reflection on the type of irresponsible argument we have heard for a number of days. The Liberals have also dropped to a new low—23 per cent, which indicates that they want to give everything to the railways. Do not think for one minute, Mr. Speaker, that possibly the primary producer does not understand the situation better than anyone sitting in this House. He is out there on what I would call the firing line. He realizes the problem as it exists. It seems that the New Democratic Party has disregarded the fact that there may be a producer who is 50 or 100 miles from a rail line and where trucks would certainly be an advantage. That advantage should be used in the best interests of the primary producer. If we must, let us build better roads. If one goes back in the history of agriculture, in 1905 some 95 per cent of the people were involved in agriculture. They produced enough food to feed themselves, basically.

• (1710)

**Mr. Flis:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The history of agriculture is very important and very interesting. However, I would remind the Hon. Member that we are concerned with a transportation Bill. What would guide Hon. Members on this side in how to vote for this subamendment proposed by the New Democratic Party would be if the Hon. Member could explain to the House why Conservative Members are willing to support the NDP subamendment to their Clause 17(4), which almost makes it null and void. I am having great difficulty in knowing how to vote on this because Clause 17(4) is a clause brought in by the Conservative Party. Now it is willing to support the NDP amendment which wipes out its own clause, which was proposed in committee.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I call to the attention of the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) that debate at report stage must be strictly relevant to amendments which are before the House.

**Mr. Gustafson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just coming to the relevant part of why trucking is so important to the primary producer and to grain transportation. This is what we are talking about. If Hon. Members opposite do not understand that, then we are going to have a very difficult time to communicate the greater import of Motion No. 35. What I was saying—which was very relevant to the motion we are discussing—was that in 1905, 95 per cent of all the people in North America were directly related to agriculture. Today it is less than 4 per cent. Yet they produce enough food to feed everyone. If we are going to stand in the way of progress and say we are not going to build roads and, on the other hand, as the Government would say, we are going to abandon all branch lines, then we are going to have some problems. We must take the best of both, and that is what we in this Party have tried to do in respect of Clause 17, so that the producer can benefit both from a better branch line—as my colleague, the Hon. Member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) pointed out in his recommendations—better trucking and better roads. This would strengthen the position of the primary producer.

It has been my observation that on Motions Nos. 34 and 35, the New Democratic Party, particularly, has been playing politics. It has been digging itself deeper and deeper. If it is not careful, the headlines will not read only 14 per cent in the polls but the polls will show that Party going down to 10 per cent or 12 per cent. I believe what we are seeing here is a Party struggling for survival. In order to save their seats, Hon. Members are making some irresponsible statements in the House with regard to the situation of transportation which exists, in reality, for the primary producer.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear my good friend, the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) talk about how irresponsible this Party is with respect to Motion No. 35. I understand, though, he is going to be supporting Motion No. 35. I wonder, therefore, why he is making those kinds of comments. I believe it shows that he is speaking for the sake of speaking. I am not