

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

arguments into context as far as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Flis) is concerned, the amendment which we are discussing very specifically states:

"the grain producers, but such agreements shall not provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport from shipping points on rail lines which have not been abandoned by order of the Canadian Transport Commission".

I submit that Clause 17(4), without the amendment, will be used by the CPR, the CNR, the Canadian Transport Commission and the Government of Canada to go ahead with their planned abandonment of branch lines on the Prairies. Therefore, the reason this amendment is being put before the House by our Party, in view of the arguments that the Conservatives have been putting before us in the last two days against the Clause that we are trying to amend, is to ensure that the Administrator, by the authority that he is given in Clause 17(4), will not be able to use trucking to assist in the abandonment of branch lines. Therefore, the whole impact of our arguments on Motion No. 35 is based on the fact that it would be possible to use that amendment to abandon rail lines.

A number of Hon. Members have spoken on the effects of trucking and the efficiency of lines. That is the key to this particular amendment. If efficiency is used as an argument to abandon lines, it ignores the social impact of abandonment. It ignores the needs of rural communities. It ignores all the other factors which are part of abandonment of branch lines on the Prairies.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** Order. I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but I must inform him that his allotted time has expired.

**Some Hon. Members:** Continue.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** The Hon. Member could be allowed to continue if there was unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** There is not unanimous consent.

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed that the other Hon. Members in the Chamber did not choose to allow my hon. colleague to continue.

**Mr. Fisher:** We're not.

**Mr. Keeper:** I know there is no disappointment on that side of the House, but certainly on this side of the House we were deeply impressed with the wisdom of his remarks. I am sure that every Member of the House knows in his heart that my colleague was making very telling arguments. That is why they would not let him continue.

**Mr. Evans:** Of course, it was irrelevant to the amendment.

**Mr. Keeper:** A colleague of mine suggests that other Members in the Chamber do not have hearts. I would not say that at all.

At this moment in the Chamber we are dealing with Motion No. 35, which is a motion to amend Motion No. 34, relating to trucking of grain, and Clause 17(4), all of which comes under the purview of the Crow legislation which is now before the House.

The policy that is being promoted by the Bill that is before us, whether it applies to subsidized trucking or to the handling of the Crow rate itself, has the same fundamental flaw in it; that is, that the action being undertaken by the Government in this instance, I understand, supported by the Conservative Party, is detrimental to the farming community and to grain producers. What is being debated is the fact that the Administrator, by virtue of the Government's action, would be given authority to subsidize the movement of grain by truck, by motor vehicle.

● (1240)

Our Party has suggested that this provision be amended so that the subsidies would be limited to cases where rail lines have already been abandoned. We put forward this amendment because grain transportation is a vital part of the grain industry which, in itself, is essential to the western economy and economic health of Canada as a whole. Our Party fears that if these subsidies are permitted to take place on existing branch lines, the railways could use their own trucking companies to haul the grain and thereby reduce the amount of grain being transported over the branch line. This would provide the Government with statistical justification for further abandonment of branch lines.

We oppose trucking subsidies where branch lines already exist because the whole process of branch line abandonment across western Canada and particularly in Saskatchewan has been very detrimental to small rural communities. We believe that the removal of branch lines is the elimination of the most efficient and cost-effective way to transport grain.

We are appalled that not only is the Government contemplating the abandonment of these lines, but it is proposing a subsidy for trucking which would naturally lead to the further abandonment of branch lines. We know that branch line abandonment is a sensitive issue in the West since there has been a great deal of protest over previous efforts to abandon branch lines.

Our amendment makes it clear that we would limit these subsidies on lines that have already been authorized for abandonment by the Canadian Transport Commission. In those cases there has already been an opportunity for public hearings at which communities could state their case. There has been the opportunity to examine the social and economic impact of the abandonment of a particular branch line.

While there may be some debate whether a certain branch line is economically viable, we should at least grant the people and the communities who depend on those branch lines the