

Western Grain Transportation Act

the port. It is very, very important traffic. When someone gets the mindset that what we are dealing with is a transportation Bill and not a grain Bill, it gives us some serious problems.

We receive a great deal of propaganda from the railroad and the federal Government to the effect that we should not try to improve the Bill—just let the darn thing go through and then, when we get in power, fix it up. To them I say that the Bill is too fundamental and too important. If it goes through in its present form and if the type of amendment set out in Motion No. 33 is put aside, then all Canada from Thunder Bay west loses an opportunity to have value add activities on top of its primary agricultural production. The other thing we lose by continuing to ignore the wisdom of this type of motion is the competitive pressures of an open marketplace on transportation systems. Why should the grower be locked into a rail system if he can move his grain more efficiently by truck? Why should we get into the high cost of branch line maintenance when, who knows—if we put competitive pressures on the system we might find the farmers have a more cost effective way of moving it?

For the Bill to provide for the delivery of all the payment, the subsidy that the Government is putting into the system, strictly into the railroad system is to deny the future of western Canada the further value add in the form of cattle feeding, meat packing plants, crushing plants and further manufacturing of the agricultural wealth that comes out of that prairie basin.

Locking it into the railway system alone locks the farmer into that one mode of transportation. That is literally a tragedy, Mr. Speaker. We have to get this point across to the Government and start to open up the methods of payment that allows all, or a good part, of that subsidy to go out to the producer so that he has the freedom of choice to elect what shall be done with the grain.

We must take into consideration the fact that the farmer on the Prairies is receiving no more for his grain today than he received in 1973 and all his costs of production have inflated, just as those of the railroads have. Yet, in this element of transportation we propose to remove a statutory limit. There is talk of a basket clause or a safety net of 10 per cent. But unless world grain prices go up, I do not know how the farmer on the Canadian prairies will be able to increase productivity. He must do this if he is to offset the imposition of the massive increase in the cost of getting his grain to port in the next decade.

Why would anyone say that this motion is not acceptable? What we are trying to do is to give the grower some form of protection and put some pressure on the CTC which has not been doing its job in terms of the producers' costs. Why does the Government not accept it and give the producers a little more hope in a very bad Bill?

● (1650)

I see that you are on the edge of your seat, Mr. Speaker, with anxiety as the result of my remarks. You are about to ask me to sit down because my time has expired.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments to express my views on this important amendment. Essentially what we have, as the Hon. Member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington) has just stated, is an amendment concerning statutory limitation. It would also, quite naturally, extend the opportunities for competition so that the farmers would have a minimal level of service.

I submit, Sir, that one of the great mistakes made by the Government with this legislation is consistently to point the finger toward western Canada and say that the people there could not get their act together and the Government had to take the question in hand. From a political perspective the Government effectively pointed out the differences in western Canada and then said that because those differences exist, they do not have their act together. Sir, the differences exist because the West is not homogeneous, rather, it is a mixed agricultural economy, and while there is a significant difference between Alberta and Saskatchewan, I tell you, Sir, there should be a difference.

More than 85 per cent of the grain grown in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is exported. In the Province of Alberta, by contrast, 47 per cent of the grain is used in feed lots, in poultry and in swine production. The result is, Sir, that in Alberta there is a very extensive feed lot and meat packing industry. If this amendment, and others associated with it, are not accepted we could lose some 6,000 jobs and, according to at least two economic reports I have seen, somewhere between \$400 million and \$600 million annually. Feed lot operators in Alberta would be in the position of having to match the Government subsidy of at least 45 cents a bushel. Other parts of the country would be receiving an advantage of 45 cents a bushel because they are moving that grain to export markets. In effect, Sir, what you would have is a 90 cent a bushel disparity between one region of Canada and another. Alberta would be in a position where its feed grains are being exported to create industry in either some other Province or some other country. That, Sir, would mean not only the export of grain, it would mean the export of sons and daughters. When you lose the secondary industry, you also lose your sources of employment. I submit that we are talking about an agency with the power of persuasion plus some authority to ensure that the railways effectively move the grain or, alternatively, open up the market for other modes of transportation.

Over the past 12 months, Mr. Speaker, there has been enormous transportation congestion in the community of Oyen and, more recently this past spring, in the community of Loughheed. At the present time there is very serious congestion on the line between Camrose and Forestburg, and more specifically the community of Heisler.

As a Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I really have no place to turn in order to help my constituents except to make appeals to agencies which do not have the necessary authority. What the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) has done in his amendment is, by using the words "shall require if necessary", to give the agency the power to make things happen for the farmers of this country. We have to ask