

Western Grain Transportation Act

do so. I admire his enterprising spirit, but I do not like to see Canadian Pacific Transport coming in to truck our grain. That is what it plans on doing. It knows this Bill will erode our transportation system. It knows that it will be on the milk line. The next thing we know Canadian Pacific Transport will be trucking grain from Saskatchewan to the ports.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting for one who understands what is going on in rural areas to note the contradiction in the New Democratic Party camp on this motion. Obviously the Hon. Member for Regina East (Mr. de Jong) did not understand what was happening. It is important to look at the flexibility in trucking and the reality of what is happening in rural areas. There are areas where the lines have already been taken out and where there are major problems for farmers who find themselves several miles from elevators. It would be in the best interests of producers to have something in the Bill to give them an equal opportunity to get their grain to market as persons who happen to have their farms situated alongside a main line or large elevator.

There are two important matters to mention when we talk about this problem. First, we have the value of land and second, the impact of what will happen to land costs on someone who does not have an elevator within a few miles of his farm. We are living in a day when advancement is taking place. It would be ludicrous not to recognize that or the fact that there are some problems for producers out there. While no one wants to see rail lines taken out, farmers are faced with other problems at the present time. This is why the NDP motion is not in the best interests of producers. Returning to the subject of the price of land, I say that it is a very important aspect. If there is unequal opportunity to deliver grain and get it into the system, and if the cost is 30 cents or 40 cents higher for some farmers who happen to be miles away from the main line, major problems result. Anyone familiar with the Prairies knows that in Saskatchewan, an elevator was put in every nine miles on the line. That may be the case in Alberta and Manitoba as well.

● (1700)

Mr. Benjamin: Six miles.

Mr. Gustafson: One Member says that in some places it is every six miles. At many of those points the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the elevator companies have removed the elevators.

A problem exists on the basis of the system we now have where, without any further deterioration, trucks could become of very vital interest to the primary producer. For any prairie Member to speak against truckers having the right to operate in a way that is in the best interest of the primary producer is unthinkable. I support the amendment as it now stands. Subclause 17(4) now reads:

The Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may enter into agreements to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport where, in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers.

It is clear that it is to protect the producer.

There are several examples in my riding of producers who are many miles from an elevator. If the Administrator brought forward a program to enhance the position of producers, I would support it. That is what the Bill does in Clause 17. The amendment would disregard subclause 17(4), taking that advantage away from the producer.

With regard to the cost of land, there is a vast difference between parcels of land which are close to the main lines and those more removed. The trucking industry would strengthen the position of those farmers, reinforcing their investment as opposed to depleting their assets.

It is certainly more fair to have subclause 17(4). If the clause were removed, there would be no way of dealing with the problem. While none of us like to see the abandonment of rail lines, there is no way that it is practical to run a line for 20 or 30 miles. Obviously the best approach is trucking.

The NDP says this will wreck the roads. We live in an advanced age. There are 18-wheel trucks, and these should be used in the best interests of the grain producers and other industries. To say that we cannot build roads to handle these trucks is not correct. There are trucks that are not hard on these roads. That argument has never sat right with me. The truck that is hardest on a rural road is a one-tone truck with a 750 tire carrying 100 bushels of grain. It plunges right into the pavement. A tandem truck with four 1,000 by 20 inch tires rolls over the road. It is not hard on the road. That is just an argument that the NDP use—

Mr. Benjamin: That is not your small farmer.

Mr. Gustafson: The small farmer can hire a large truck if necessary. It would be cheaper. In addition, it would allow the Government to pay for bringing in the grain. It restricts the small producer, in fact the whole agriculture industry, to have this kind of amendment which stifles growth and stands in the way of progress.

I want to make it abundantly clear that we do not stand for, nor do we like to see, the removal of any rail line, but there are areas now where the farmers are in a serious situation because of distance. This type of clause will enhance and strengthen their position.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, the debate on the amendments to Bill C-155 has been a series of wonderful opportunities to point out the difference between the New Democratic Party and the Progressive Conservative Party when it comes to things western Canadian. If we are honest in our beliefs about the way the western economy, and in this case the western transportation system, ought to be organized, we should be glad for this opportunity to make clear the differences which exist between us on these issues. This amendment, like the one I had the opportunity to speak to having to do with the role of the Canadian Wheat Board, is another example of how far apart we are from our Progressive Conservative colleagues, who in this case have joined with the Liberals to have a clause in the Bill which we are attempting to remove through our amendment.