

*Oral Questions***WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT**

INVESTMENT BY RAILWAYS—FARMERS' FREIGHT COSTS

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the Minister of Transport. He will be aware that farm bankruptcies in western Canada are up 110 per cent this year over last year. He will also be aware that the position of farmers in western Canada has deteriorated as a result of the new freight rate regime enacted as a result of Bill C-155.

Given the fact that the railways have now expressed the view that they will not invest the \$16.5 billion as was promised, and that it will be closer to \$12 billion, what corresponding reduction can the Minister promise to farmers? They were asked to pay more to get more, and now that investment will not take place. Is he considering any action to reduce the burden on the farmers in a corresponding way?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member knows, the investment that will be made by the railways will still be on target in terms of developing the major expansion of the capacity of the rail system in western Canada. There is no reduction or diminution in the commitment. The realignment of the forecast is simply because of economic circumstances that have changed. Fortunately we have had a substantial reduction in the inflation rate, and this means that the actual dollar cost of the project has been reduced substantially but the work will still go ahead. There is no reduction in that respect.

● (1500)

Some of the projects related to other aspects of the transportation system, particularly in the coal area, have been put off for a longer period while waiting for a pickup of the export market in the coal and natural resource area.

I can tell the Hon. Member that we will hold the railways very clearly to their responsibility to expand the railway system substantially so there will be no blockages and no handicaps in the movement of our grain. We will continue to monitor the situation and, if they do not live up to those commitments, we will apply the sanctions and penalties which I am capable of applying under the Act.

REQUEST THAT ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN BE CANCELLED

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, the Minister acknowledged before the Standing Committee on Transport the fact that there would be a reduction in railway investment. The railways have said there would be a reduction in investment, and there will be a reduction in the number of jobs. There is a reduction in the traffic forecast. As a minimum, would the Minister cease and desist the false and misleading propaganda which is being perpetrated on Canadians across the country through an expensive ad campaign which is insulting not only to the Canadian taxpayer but, indeed, to the farmer? Would the Minister at least do that

much in acknowledgment of the fact he admitted in committee the other day?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I do want to point out to the Hon. Member that the purpose of the information program is to alert Canadian businesses to the many opportunities this rail expansion program offers. It is one of the largest economic development projects ever undertaken in the history of Canada. It is very important that Canadian manufacturers and suppliers are able to bid for that work so that they will receive the maximum value out of the program.

Mr. Mazankowski: Tell the truth.

Mr. Axworthy: They will not receive that value if they are not aware of the wide range of opportunities available. That is the reason we have the information program.

Mr. Mazankowski: Would you tell the truth?

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PETITIONS

MR. KRISTIANSSEN—NATIONAL FILM BOARD FILM ON ABORTION

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has laid upon the Table the report of the Clerk of Petitions stating that he has examined the petition presented by the Hon. Member for Kootenay West (Mr. Kristiansen) on Wednesday, March 28, 1984, and finds that the petition does not meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

WEEKLY STATEMENT

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for the Yukon on the usual question on House business?

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Would the Government House Leader reaffirm that tomorrow will indeed be an allotted day and inform us as to the business of the House as far as he can take us into next week?

While he is answering that question, he will know that there is on yesterday's Notice Paper notice of the introduction of a supplementary borrowing Bill which, I am informed, is in the amount of \$4 billion, pursuant to a House order which was made last year. Is it the intention of the Government to move for leave today to introduce that legislation?

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, on the first question, I want to confirm that tomorrow is indeed an Opposition Day, as I indicated yesterday. In so far as the business for next week is concerned, I had a meeting this morning with my colleagues, the House Leaders, and indicated to them, after asking them a