

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Perhaps, to be quite candid with you, when you talk of growing disenchantment I must begin by saying that some of my reading of the west is that it is always disenchanted.

We all agree, I think, that in view of the complexities of the agricultural economy today, explanations should be forthcoming. We should discuss thoroughly with the people concerned the matter I have raised tonight. I ask, why would the west not be disenchanted with the government, when it is realized that the plan we are talking about, the one concerning the rationalization and handling of grain transportation, has been in the hands of the railway companies for over two months? It has been in the hands of the various grain handling companies. They have had the opportunity to look at the plan confidentially. I emphasize that. It has been in the hands of those people but has not been made available to Members of Parliament. If Members of Parliament are to be credible and discharge credibly their duty of considering legislation in this House, this plan should be made available to them so they can discuss it with the people who will be directly affected.

The two main steps that are being taken in the agricultural field are branch line rationalization and the step to do with the rationalization of grain handling and transportation. Surely we want to be honest with the people who will be adversely, or possibly beneficially affected by this plan. Surely the government could make this plan available to members of the House. If, perchance, we can get out of this House within the next week or so, each and every one of us representing an agricultural community will be able to go to his constituency, call meetings and explain the plan. We can explain the workings of the plan to the producers who will be affected by it. They will have an opportunity to advise us about it, to discuss it and argue the benefits or otherwise of the plan. I therefore plead with the minister tonight to make this plan available to every Member of Parliament.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I regret to say that the remarks of the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Skoberg) are so smart, and the distortions introduced are so irresponsible that they do not augur well for the role that some hon. members would play in connection with any information being put forward for the good of agriculture.

Mr. Skoberg: Oh, boy! That is a good start.

Mr. Lang: About two years ago we began working on making the existing transportation system work better. We studied the total system so that the facts would be available on the cost of a better system and on the cost of alternatives. We succeeded in making the existing system work better, to the extent that our very great selling efforts which are reaching record proportions each year, and which will set new records this year, are reaching levels which some experts a few months ago felt were impossible to achieve with existing capacity. We think that this is a result of hard work and planning and stems from our interest in looking after the interests of agriculture.

We said all along in our handling and transportation studies that we would try to find the facts, present the facts and leave it to the producers to decide in this matter. We wanted to try to make sure that the producer would be chief beneficiary of any improvements which might be made. In this work we had the tremendous co-operation of the elevator companies, those great co-ops of the Prairies, the other elevator companies and the railways in putting together the facts and figures with which we wanted to work.

We then put the studies as they progressed into the hands of these people to give us back criticisms as part of the further work. We have now put them into the hands of the interested western provinces with the same idea, that we should have meetings, discussions and whatever studies are required so that we will have a more complete picture to present when we have anything to present at all.

• (10:20 p.m.)

We can be sure of one thing. The moment the studies are available to the hon. member who makes these slang remarks, he will either be saying they are incomplete, too complete or three times too complete. My objective has been to simply present the facts and avoid this very kind of conflict. That is why we try to work with the companies and the provinces, to present a balanced picture not only of economic involvement but of all the social problems involved in any changes which might be made. Our object is to avoid conflict and petty politics and to work quietly together for the good of the farmer.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10:25 p.m.