

the Crow debate until he was derailed by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) from his position. He told us at that time that he would have gone with the consensus in western Canada if a consensus could have been worked out. If the Prime Minister had left the Minister for External Relations in his position as Minister of Transport in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, a consensus could have been reached. He would have gone out to western Canada and spoken to the various groups that were deeply involved in that process. The producers, while they may have different ideas as to how the system should work, are all very, very intelligent people. They know what is required and they also recognize that their fellow being has to survive in an economic environment that will be of benefit to all concerned. I think it has been one of the greatest disasters, as far as the Liberal Government is concerned, in having the Minister taken—as I said “derailed”—from that position.

The Government then brought in the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy). What did he do? He made promises. He promised western farmers, Members in the House and members of the committee that there would be \$16 billion going to western Canada to provide a facility that would be of benefit to all western Canadians—in fact, to all of Canada. Any of the income which is derived from the use of that rail is usually as a result of export products that help defray our deficit balance of trade payments. Outside of lumber, the grain industry is one of the major components that assists Canada in establishing a favourable balance of trade on the world market.

The Minister said that western Canada would get \$16 billion and 375,000 jobs. He is now saying that western Canada will only receive \$12 billion. That represents a 25 per cent cut. There is a consensus among some people in western Canada who feel that if that figure is being allocated as a result of a lesser cost factor in what has to be done, they could accept that. But they cannot accept the fact that the job allocation will be cut from 375,000 jobs to 155,000 jobs. That is a misleading statement on the part of the Minister of Transport.

The Minister for External Relations played a fair and honest role. He was recognized for his honesty in western Canada. But the present Minister of Transport, in misleading western Canadians as he has, will never be trusted. That is probably one of the reasons he will not return to the House of Commons. The same thing will happen to him that happened to the Hon. Otto Lang. He made promises in western Canada which were not fulfilled and he is not in the House of Commons today. You cannot promise something to western Canadians and then not fulfil that promise. If you do that, you create your own demise.

It is unfortunate that western Canadians are caught in the dilemma of receiving a payment once every five years. We must have an election in order to get a payment. There was a payment in 1979 just prior to the election, but in all the intervening years when the situation gradually became worse and worse as the months went by, was there any suggestion of a pay-out? No, not once. Even the Minister of Agriculture

Western Grain Stabilization Act

(Mr. Whelan) told us that the earliest a payment could be made without breaking the law was in October. What do we hear today? The Minister of Transport, of all people, will bring in an amendment and have a pay-out by the end of July. That means—

Mr. Gustafson:—an August election.

Mr. Towers: As my colleague from Assiniboia says, it means an August election.

• (1420)

Who is the Minister of Transport? He is the western organizer for the Hon. John Turner. If there is anything that western Canada detests, it is the manipulation of a system by politicians. It is detestable that they would even think of doing that because they are playing with the well-being of their fellow westerners. It is not acceptable and they will discover the consequences.

We told the Minister of Transport, the Hon. Otto Lang, when he brought this Bill in, that it would not work. But he would not listen. Now, eight years later, other members of the governing Party have decided that it cannot and will not work. They are taking action to correct some of the problems we tried to tell the Minister and the Government about at the time the Bill was proposed eight years ago. It is terribly frustrating to take eight years to correct a problem. When you can recognize it in the making. It is totally frustrating and makes all of us on this side of the House awfully angry.

Today I made some glowing comments about the Minister of State for External Relations. I meant them, but he is misleading the House somewhat when he says that after this year there will be \$600 million still left in the fund. What the Minister has forgotten to consider are the payments that producers are now making and will continue to make this crop year, with the result that the fund will grow by approximately \$150 million. Instead of having a fund of \$600 million at the end of the year, it will be \$750 million. My colleagues have pointed out that the money that the Government is paying out is farmers' own money. Big deal! The farmers are just getting back what they have paid in.

Let me impress upon this House one fact that seems to have been missed by a considerable number of Members. The Government is trying to make a big thing about having paid interest on the money in this fund. But are the farmers not entitled to a return on their investment? Certainly the return does not measure up to what the farmers could have made had they invested that money in their own way. On top of that, we must not overlook the fact that a lot of this money had to be replaced through borrowing. The Government spent the money and I was flabbergasted when I found out this money was going to find its way into the general revenues of the Government. The Government has spent it and now it has to be requisitioned through the estimates in order to pay it back. Had the money been invested at the high rates of interest we have recently experienced, then the fund would be greater. Instead the money was put into the general revenues of the