

Western Grain Transportation Act

not arguing that we for some strange, unknown reason go to some less efficient mode of transportation. My colleague the Hon. Member for Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands (Mr. Manly) made the point quite correctly. Anyone who has studied the costs per unit of moving heavy commodities, whether wood, grain, iron ore or coal, knows it is more cost efficient, almost regardless of what quality of highway is constructed, to move by rail instead of by road. You simply shift very extensive costs to municipalities and provinces if you move very heavy axle weights at certain times of the year either on gravel or on paved highways.

Branch line abandonment would be compounded, certainly in a lot of rural and northern areas of the Prairies, for a very simple and obvious reason. If the subsidy would make the trucking even marginally more competitive and the Administrator had the power or the authority to say "Okay, we are going to have trucking firms bringing all of the grain from the north Peace down into the main line areas," the smaller elevators would have to consolidate.

The ones who would lose in this operation, as most Members know, are the existing country elevator systems which are really the three prairie Wheat Pools. And getting the gravy on the other side will be the private grain trade. One does not have to go too far to find a political connection between the private grain trade and the two larger Parties in this House.

Mr. Malone: The next thing you know, people will be making a profit.

Mr. Fulton: The Hon. Member from Alberta says the first thing you know is somebody will be making a profit. I have watched with some degree of pain what has been happening in my area as certain products have been shifted from rail on to the road. For a very short period of time it appears there is some kind of job creation going on, that the truckers are getting more jobs, that there are more trucks on the road and there are a few more service operations open. But you have to look at it in a more global context in terms of what happens when a branch line is abandoned. I think Mr. Justice Emmett Hall's Royal Commission's evidence on this made it quite clear. When the branch line closes and the country elevator goes, what happens? What is associated with the country elevator? There might be a butcher shop and a little grocery store, perhaps a gas station. If those go, then what happens? Kids have to be bussed farther to school because the small school in the community has moved. What you have is a complete reconsolidation.

A very dramatic facelift on the Canadian Prairies would occur if there are not changes made such as the one that we are making. It is all very good for the Liberals and the Tories to say, "Well, trucking is more competitive". I would be the first one to be calling for an amendment if all that we were talking about was making it more competitive. We have to look at the global and social costs of these kinds of massive changes. It is abundantly clear that if trucking corporations in certain areas—I am not saying in all areas—of the grain trade are to get this kind of subsidy, we will see branch line

abandonment; and immediately behind that, as demonstrated historically decade after decade already, we will see elevator abandonment and the pools will start to lose their own members from the existing elevator system. The trucks will be going right by into the centralized inland pool operations.

It will have a direct impact on the largest and one of the most efficient grain elevator systems ever constructed in the world, namely the one now being constructed in my constituency of Prince Rupert. Both of the main pools, the Alberta and Saskatchewan pools which are the key components of and key financial participants in that elevator system which will cost about \$300 million, stand to lose if the Liberals and Tories continue with their existing position on this amendment. We stand to lose with Motion No. 34 by allowing the subsidies to go to the trucking operations, because the majority of the grain that is going to be moving through the Port of Prince Rupert comes from the northern and rural areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan, areas that are now served in some sense by branch lines and by rural pools. They will simply no longer operate in that way.

If we were more sensitive, we would be calling for a much broader and careful articulation and evaluation of what the impact of the over-all Crow legislation is going to be four or five years from now. The farmers are saying that they will lose 30,000 or 40,000 rural farms. If this amendment does not carry, we will lose X number of country pools, we will lose more branch lines and we will see increased costs shifted to municipalities to keep the roads open and provide the depth of pavement required for the axle weights needed for hauling grain by rubber.

The costs to Canadians generally of not being very careful with amendments such as this and including them in the Crow legislation go far beyond what a Liberal or a Tory Member might say. We might hear them say: "Well, all we are saying is that if it is more cost competitive to go by rubber, then go by rubber." That is true, Mr. Speaker, very true. What we need to do in this country is to become more efficient and more cost caring. But at the same time we have to take a look at the history of what has happened in the farming community by not being very careful about applying principles that are in the long-term interests of the farming community, which are in the long-term interests of the Port of Prince Rupert and to a balance of trade in this country which is \$6 billion a year from grain. I think all Members of this House have a responsibility to look very carefully at this amendment and to support it.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to enter this debate, which is my first opportunity at this stage of the Bill. This Bill affects my riding and the people of the Peace country very much. It will have an impact that cannot be measured in terms of today but in terms of the future of our whole area.

First, I want to pay a compliment to the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and to various other Members of my Party who worked so hard all summer long on this particular piece of legislation. They put in hours and hours of