

Western Grain Transportation Act

● (1540)

Mr. Campbell (Cardigan): I will inquire, Madam Speaker.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker: Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Transport; and Motion No. 33 (Mr. Mazankowski).

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to resume debate on Motion No. 33, the amendment put forward by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) with regard to Clause 17(d), which would really add an element of time to the movement of grain. Rather than simply having powers of promotion for the movement of cars and grains, it would add the words, "shall require, if necessary, reciprocal and other arrangements". The key matter before us involves why CN and CP should give up a long trip for a short trip. Why should they move grain as efficiently and effectively as possible if they can stall, either by leaving the cars on the sidings, waiting too long to get the cars to be loaded, or taking their time getting them to the ports? By adding the key word "require", a time element would be added, which is crucial.

I would like to give a reminder to the Parliamentary Secretary who spoke this morning and said that the amendment contravenes the powers of the CTC and under the Railway Act. I think we all know that if one has a contract, if one has ships waiting at the Port of Prince Rupert, one wants the grain cars to be there so that they can be unloaded and put onto the vessel while the vessel is there and not lose the contract. If we were always to wait under the new proposed Crow legislation for CTC hearings or for the implementation of the Railway Act, there would be an awful lot of farmers with grain sitting on their farms.

Mr. Justice Emmett Hall had a few comments to which I think Government Members should pay a little attention. They do not seem to be moving too quickly in preparing themselves to accept the amendment. I think we need to ask ourselves why the Government side would be reticent to accept it when it is pretty clear that witnesses who appeared before the committee favoured this kind of legislation. The majority of Hon. Mem-

bers on this side favour this kind of amendment. What kind of a signal is the Government really trying to send out to the CN, the CP, Wood-Gundy and various shareholders of CP stock? The impression is really being left that the trough is wide open out there, that CP can keep all the bottlenecks it likes, that CN can take as long as it likes, and so on.

Bill C-155, as it now stands, really leaves open field running to CN and to CP to maximize absolutely their costing for moving grain. This model, however, increases the cost to producers and allows for continued bottlenecks, stalling and lost contracts.

As Mr. Justice Hall notes, even at the existing Crow rate, the railroads hang on to loaded cars of grain for movement to export position even though the other line could move them to port over a more direct line, cutting the distance, costs and adding to the efficiency of this system. This tends to undermine the assertions of the railroads that they lose money every time they move a carload of grain. If that were so, presumably, they would lose more money for each additional mile they hauled it, and would do everything possible to get rid of it as soon as possible and stick their competition with the losses.

As we know from the way the legislation is written, that simply is not the case. There is no bonus system so that if the rail cars are moved by the shortest, quickest, most efficient route there would be some kind of a bonus per mile, per load or per car. For that kind of idea, a variable rate simply has not been included.

Therefore, the only way to go about it so as to really protect producers and our markets is to have the capacity, hopefully within the Wheat Board, if not at least through some other function within Bill C-155, to allow for the requirement of efficient and competitive movement.

With the lush revenues for moving grain under Bill C-155, this tendency to hang on to loaded grain cars as long as possible so the money will roll in as the cars roll over the road will be exaggerated. Without the authority which the amendment would give vested in the hands of a public agency, one can be sure that there would be little, if any, exchange of carloads of grain between the railroads simply for efficiency's sake.

Mr. Justice Hall, as co-ordinator of the Crow coalition, had a very interesting comment to make to the Transport Committee hearings in Regina on August 9. I think it is worthy of being on the record, particularly for consideration of Government Members. He said:

We heard a lot about efficiency, and the whole idea of the railways about efficiency was to get rid of the branchlines. That would have been very efficient from their standpoint. But on this question of efficiency, I am told by senior railway people, there is a railway philosophy that once the line gets hold of a commodity for transport, it will hang onto that commodity to the delivery points, come hell or high water. That works out this way and this is what we found, great quantities of grain grown on, say, the Goose Lake line . . . and now that may not mean too much to members from the east, but it is one of the great grain-producing areas in Saskatchewan between Saskatoon and Calgary served by the Canadian National Railways; it is closer to Vancouver at Rosetown than to Thunder Bay, so the trend is westward. Grain was taken to Calgary, but the CN has no line going from Calgary to Vancouver. So they hauled it then