

Western Grain Transportation Act

In conclusion I want to say that that is not only my idea. Former Chief Justice Emmett Hall at pages 79 and 80 of the Hall Report said: "It is the people and the spirit of the people which gives a community viability, not the railroads, not the elevators". If we had our druthers, we would have the elevator served by trucks rather than elevators served by nothing.

● (1550)

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, in taking part in this debate I would like to tell the House just exactly how wrong Members of the NDP are in trying to debate the amendment proposed by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski). If NDP Members could remember as far back as the time the Hall Report was tabled in the House of Commons, they would remember that certain rail lines were taken out and at that time there was supposed to be a trucking program put in place for those farmers who were going to be affected by the abandonment of that rail line and money would be paid to a central agency. In this case, the line from Cremona to Crossfield, which is in my constituency, was affected. Farmers in Cremona now have to haul their grain over a distance of approximately 30 miles. However, it is interesting to note that those farmers are not necessarily hauling that grain to Crossfield where it must be put through an elevator system and would further clog up the grain handling industry. Instead, the farmers went to British Columbia to find a market for their grain and are shipping it in that direction, thereby relieving the rail system of the overload. That makes sense to me.

If farmers were to have the freedom of choice to receive a portion of the funding, then the system would be relieved of the overload and trucks would be allowed to roll. I find it incomprehensible that if this amendment is deleted, farmers in that area will have to accept the extra cost of moving grain on their own when their tax dollars go right to the railway.

The railway is to receive \$650 million, but there is no money for the truckers or the farmers. The money is going straight to the railways. Not only do the farmers have to pay for transporting their grain into central British Columbia, they must also pay for the other farmers who are moving grain on the rails.

That notion is grossly unfair, and I hope that Hon. Members of the Party to my left who claim to have a conscience—and I sometimes wonder if they have one at all—will give consideration to this motion. After all, it hits the people very, very hard.

There is a great deal of grain, primarily barley and feed grain, moving out of central Alberta into the central British Columbia market as well as the southern Alberta market. Some of these hauls are anywhere from 2 to 500 miles in distance. It would seem to me that it is only honest, straightforward and reasonable that consideration be given not only to the producers but to the truckers as well. The truckers are taxpayers as well. They are also competitive. Hon. Members opposite do not really care whether or not taxpayers have to subsidize Crown corporations that operate in competition with

those taxpayers. My hon. friend over there is smiling. He recognizes what the Government is doing. Government Members should change their minds about this and allow for friendly competition.

There has been a great deal of talk about the effect the implementation of this motion would have on the highways. It is true enough that it will have a certain effect on the highways. However, every time a trainload of grain goes over a track, it too has an effect on that track and that track must be upgraded. Besides, many of these truckers travel at night when the traffic is not very heavy and they do not interfere with the automobile traffic to any great extent.

These are matters to which Hon. Members of the NDP should give consideration if they are going to keep on proposing that this amendment be deleted. The amendment is of fundamental and basic importance to the people who live in our constituencies. Perhaps Hon. Members of the NDP do not realize that in southern Alberta, large numbers of cattle are fed. A large amount of barley is produced in my constituency. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave), recognizes this fact. His constituency relies on my constituency for moving that barley to Medicine Hat and southern Alberta where the cattle are fed. It only makes sense that if there are producers who want to move their grain in that direction and if there are feeders there who require that grain, the truckers who have to move that grain should have compensation for doing so.

Members of the NDP are isolated and narrow-minded in their thinking. They have tunnel vision, if you will. It is totally incomprehensible to me that they should want to delete this amendment. I suppose, Mr. Speaker, that that spells out exactly why there are no NDP Members from the Province of Alberta. We in Alberta are far beyond that type of thinking. I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the Hon. Members to my left would reconsider their amendment to delete the amendment proposed by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski).

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, you are quick on the draw today. I am happy to participate in this debate on what I consider to be a very important question and one that is fundamental to many, many areas of western Canada. It is generally felt in most areas of the Prairies that in order to maintain the small communities, there may be from time to time some supplementary form of transportation needed. That supplementary form of transportation, of course, must in many cases be the trucking industry. That is why the amendment which proposes to delete an entire transportation industry is one that I believe is ill-advised, ill-considered and has been put forward by a group of people who keep trying to harken back to a time in the 1940s and 1950s when everything on the Prairies occurred in a way which they would like to see now. In other words, they are harkening back to a time that is not applicable to the present time.

The amendment that has been proposed, Mr. Speaker, would delete the following from the Bill: