

Western Grain Transportation Act

information is what the public, the consumers and the farmers need to know, then I think they should have that ability.

We are passing a Bill which is going to give a lot of money to the railways. We do not know what their corporate profits are. We do not know how much it costs them to maintain their lines. We do not know what the conditions of the contract between VIA and CN is. In this country we have so much secrecy, especially when it comes to the rail lines. I, as a Member of Parliament, cannot find out how much CN charges VIA and how it determines the actual costs. Why not? The reason is that we have had similar clauses in past Government legislation. The public has been denied the ability effectively to challenge CN, CP and VIA when they ask for freight rate increases, to abandon lines and for increased tariffs. I suggest that if we are to give more money to the railways, they will have to use that for maintaining the railway system in this country. Second, we must also find out what the real profit and cost structure is in the railways, otherwise it is useless for us to be discussing and debating legislation about whether or not they are profitable and whether or not they need the money to improve the railway system in this country. The public and the House of Commons have a right to know, and without that knowledge it is ironic that in time of freedom of access to information we have spent so many months here without having the very information before us that we should have had prior to the introduction of this Bill.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the principle involved in these amendments. When I read Motion No. 50 and apply it to Clause 29 as it is to be applied, it appears that the amendment and the section illustrate in a very definite way the difference in approach to this problem between the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party.

The amendment states "shall invest". The NDP wants the Government to tell the railways how they are going to spend the money, where and when. When I look at how the Government spends money in Canada Post and several other places, I am not sure we are not jumping from the frying pan into the fire. That is the approach of Members of the NDP, and I give them credit for it. Dictation is part of their philosophy. They tell the people what is good for them and run the people's business. This motion is in line with their philosophy. I would go one step further and say that the motions that have been presented by the Progressive Conservative Party are in line with our philosophy which is accountability. We are not telling them how to spend the money once the money is theirs. It shall monitor the program, annually verify the investment, analyse the general investments and audit the expenditures. In other words, they are responsible.

There are no two clauses in the Act that illustrate the two philosophies better. One, dictation, the other, accountability. If we are going to have free enterprise in this country, whether for the CPR or the small entrepreneur or farmer, the Government has to keep its nose out of it. If we want to have dictatorship and nationalization, then the Government puts its nose right into it and runs it. That is the difference between

the two Parties. The people across this country will have to decide which Party they want.

Section 55 gives authority to the Government to pay for certain expenditures. If that work has not been done and the year's crop was not transported satisfactorily, the Government should never have paid that money, and it is responsible. We want accountability for the money being paid to the railways. We do not want simply to hand it to them as in the past. People across the country are saying, "Is the CPR the Government of this country?" Sometimes they think it is.

The Canadian Transport Commission decided that it would close a branch line in the Province of Alberta. One of the lawyers found that an Act of Parliament had authorized that line to be operated in perpetuity. That was brought to the attention of the prairie section of the CTC, so they shrugged their shoulders and ordered the line abandoned. I made representations to the Cabinet that this was wrong, that CTC has no authority to defy an Act of Parliament. If the Act is wrong, rescind it, but certainly civil servants have not that right. The Government condoned the action of the CTC. It did not look into it. It could not have because its lawyers would have informed it that civil servants have no right to rescind laws passed by this House. Only this House has that authority. We took it to the Appeal Court of Canada and that court said that the CTC had no right to order the abandonment under that Act. The court ruled properly, but the Government went along and did it. That is not accountability, nor is it accountability if under Clause 55 we pay \$600 million or \$200 million to the railways, unless they have earned it. If they have, then we cannot tell them what to do with it. The next thing, we will be telling the farmer how to spend the money we give him for his crops—that he cannot buy liquor or take his wife to Hawaii. Once you earn money, it is yours. That is our way of life. We are not living in Moscow, although sometimes I wonder. We are not supposed to be living under a communistic Government. When we earn money, it is our own. If I want to take a trip on my own money, that is my business. If a farmer wants to buy a car for his wife or his son, nobody has any business telling him that he cannot.

● (2040)

That is the principle at stake here, Mr. Speaker. Once the CPR has earned the money, it is theirs. If the Government is just handing the money to them anyway, then the Government is at fault and it should be accountable to the people. That is what Clause 55 is all about, and that is what the motions proposed by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and his team mean—accountability. We are not going to dictate to the railways how they should spend their own money. They are accountable for certain things for which the money was paid to them, and that accountability is included in the Act.

I do not support Motion No. 50, Mr. Speaker. It is in line with the NDP philosophy but it is not in line with mine. I do not believe in the Government telling me how to spend the money I have earned and I do not believe in the Government