

Western Grain Transportation Act

Canadian electorate which has continuously given its support to us, can be forgiven for believing that if any corporation or any institution in Canadian society needs a second look into its operations from time to time to ensure that it is behaving in such a way as not to come into major conflict with the public interest, surely that institution is the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the railways in general.

It is interesting to note that underlying the debate, not only on these amendments but the entire debate on the reform, if you will, of the Crow rate, is the question of the investment plans of the Canadian railway system. Considering the huge bonus they are going to get as the result of the Government's program—sometimes supported by the Progressive Conservative Party sometimes not—why is it that the investment plans of CN Rail for the first year in which the Government proposals are intended to come into effect are down by 22.9 per cent? Why is it that the investment plans of CP Rail are down by some 20.4 per cent just at the time that they will begin to reap the bonanza handed to them on a silver platter by that Government, and by the Official Opposition because of its shilly-shallying and indecision over whether it supports or does not support the proposals now before us? If that does not suggest that perhaps there ought to be some singling out, some special second look, some special supervision, then I do not know what does.

● (1540)

We have nothing against the argument that if these agencies or companies receive large influxes of taxpayers' money there should be some authority vested in the new commissioner or some other agency to ensure they are performing up to snuff. But, if we already have institutions with a built-in self-policing function, where either their membership or participants are able to exert from a multiplicity of disciplines some control over their behaviour in accordance with the broad interests of all of those in the industry or in Canada as a whole, then we in this Party believe, because it is part of our general philosophy, that they should be allowed to continue with that function. But if we have evidence that the major parties to all of this, the railways, particularly the CPR, the one agency which will receive billions of dollars over the next few years as a result of the generosity of the Government and of the Opposition—and we have a century of history to give us a lot of evidence which suggests they need watching carefully, then there are mechanisms by which we can ensure that they do follow through on the commitments they have made. It is quite proper that they should be "singled out", for special observation and control.

So we have no apologies to make for what some Conservative Members, I think the Hon. Member for Crowfoot among them, have at least inferred is the "discriminatory" attitude we have taken in this matter.

The railways are the ones getting the money, they are being given the authority. There is no structure built in to ensure they meet both their moral and financial commitments to the people of Canada. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support the amendments and invite Members of good faith and good will

from both the Official Opposition and, hopefully, the Government to join with us in ensuring that those who need some supervision get it and that we allow those with self-discipline, as I indicated before, to continue to be free.

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make just a brief intervention on this motion. As Members will know, I come from a city riding and it is sometimes difficult to keep all the details in mind given such a complex piece of legislation. But if one reads over at least a portion of the committee hearings, and tries to stay alert to the general intent of the proposed amendments, I think one should come to the position of having real doubt about supporting the NDP amendment in this particular case.

The NDP sometimes suffers perhaps from a lack of membership, therefore a lack of resources and people to do adequate research. Sometimes the left hand does not really know what the right hand is doing. I guess the classic example of that is the NDP's hasty decision on December 13, 1979, to defeat a budget which was good for the country and in particular good for western Canada. When they did that it became clear subsequently—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With all due respect to the Hon. Member, I must call to his attention the fact that debate at report stage must be strictly relevant to the amendments before us.

Mr. Deans: It is about time you brought them to order.

Mr. Hawkes: I was simply trying to make the point that in this amendment I think we have a Party, the NDP, which has not done its homework on the implications. In 1979, Mr. Speaker, we put in place a Grain Commissioner. I bring to your attention the fact that he was empowered to deal with the entire system of grain movement. At the committee meeting held on Wednesday, August 31, 1983, the deputy minister had this to say about the Commissioner:

No, Mr. Chairman. That has not been the experience of the past four years. The general sense of most of the agricultural organizations in western Canada was that the existing entity was working well—

That entity, Mr. Speaker, was put in place by the Conservatives in 1979. He went on to say:

—that, indeed, there was a potential to do more. That is why there was such broad agreement in both the Gilson process and in the Central Co-ordinating Agency Task Force among those organizations to set up the kind of organizations as provided for in this bill.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, to have a co-ordinator empowered to look at the entire grain system was a Conservative Government innovation in 1979. I suggest to the House that looking back over the last three and a half years we have seen it work and we must be alert to amendments which would remove from that administrative person the power, authority and responsibility to look at the entire system.

I bring to the attention of the House that the Conservative Party moved a motion in committee, which was supported by the NDP, and the chief spokesman on this matter for the NDP agreed with us that it really should be political people, Cabinet