

interest at heart, would have the teeth to put this agreement in place.

● (1240)

We are very concerned that when you give this kind of money to the railways—who have not performed that well in the past on public subsidies—the Bill sought to contain clauses with teeth that will ensure the maximum performance by the railways to get grain to port in the best interests of the producer.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, I was rather interested in the remarks of the Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) who implied that we in the NDP did not support this particular amendment. I think the Hon. Member misunderstood what the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) has been saying all along. If he wishes to check the record, he will find that the Hon. Member for Regina West said: "This amendment is some more window dressing on behalf of the Conservative Party and I will not use any stronger words. However, I can support the amendment, for all the good it will do." That is exactly what the Hon. Member for Regina West said.

It is refreshing to find that finally the Conservative Party speaks in support of its own amendment. This morning the NDP has put up nine speakers to the Conservatives' one in support of the amendment. This makes one wonder whether that Party has had a change of heart again with respect to the impact of the Crow rate and what it will do to the farming community in the country and to consumers generally, as I pointed out in earlier remarks on the Bill.

What the spokesperson for the Progressive Conservative Party called for several weeks ago was, in effect, a hoist on any amendments to the Crowsnest Pass rate. According to press reports, this stirred up a hornet's nest in political circles in Ottawa at that time because it appeared that the Conservative Party had changed its mind again and was saying, in effect, that because of the political difficulties in the country and because of popular support for the existing Crowsnest Pass rate, particularly in the prairie Provinces, it had decided that statements made by the official spokesman for a hoist of three years was being read as support for the Crowsnest Pass rate.

I do not know what happened between the time that statement was made and September 29, 1983, when it was reported in the *Western Producer* that the Conservative Party had decided it was not the better part of wisdom to follow that course and was arguing that it was going to drop the proposal. Perhaps that is the reason it has put up only one speaker today in support of the amendment.

As I understand it, the amendment to Clause 17(d) proposed by the Conservative Party would enhance the authority of the Grain Transportation Agency, through an Administrator, over the railroads and specifically would give him the power to direct them to exchange carloads of grain where such exchanges would improve the efficiency of moving grain to export positions.

Western Grain Transportation Act

As the Hon. Member for Regina West has already pointed out and as I pointed out the other day, while we would argue that there is no need for the Grain Transportation Agency and that the Administrator already has too much power in the sense that his powers encroach upon the authority of the Canadian Wheat Board, this is a good amendment and we support it. No matter what public agency has control over the transportation of grain, be it the Wheat Board, the Canadian Grains Commission, the Grain Transportation Agency or whatever, it should have the ability to direct the railroads to exchange cars so as to promote efficiency. As Mr. Justice Hall noted, even at the existing Crow rate the railroads hang on to loaded cars of grain for movement to export positions 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 the system.

In his testimony before the Transport Committee in Regina on August 9, 1983, Mr. Justice Hall said:

We heard a lot about efficiency, and the whole idea of the railways about efficiency was to get rid of the branch-lines. 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 northward 200 miles to Edmonton so they can take it south again to Vancouver. That was the CN.

CP with the Hardisty line, which is another line going through Edmonton... all that CPR grain went to Edmonton, but there is no line from Edmonton into Vancouver—so it went south to go to Vancouver. Trainloads of grain were passing each other like ships in the night between Calgary and Edmonton.

I do not know what else we did on the commission, but we shamed the railways into entering into an agreement to exchange cars—car for car—not exchanging traffic but car for car. That agreement, I think, still subsists. I think it can be abrogated on 30 days' notice. That is about the situation.

If you have ever seen an example of inefficiency, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that would be it. I think what Mr. Justice Hall was attesting to was that all of these measures tend to undermine the assertion 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 haul it and then would do everything possible to get rid of it and stick their competition with the loss.

With the lush revenues from moving grain under Bill C-155, this tendency to hang on to loaded grain cars as long as possible so that the money will roll in as the cars roll over the road will be exaggerated. Without the authority the amendment would give vested in the hands of a public agency, you can be sure there would be little, if any, exchange of carloads of grain between the railroads for the sake of efficiency. Again I quote a few words from the testimony of Mr. Justice Emmett Hall at that Transport Committee hearing in Regina on August 9. Mr. Justice Hall, in dealing with that question, said: