

Western Grain Transportation Act

Conservative Party who have not had the gumption to get up and speak on these amendments.

It was rather interesting although depressing to note that when an amendment moved by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) was before the House earlier this week and last, at one point ten Members from the New Democratic Party spoke on his amendment and only one Member from the Tory Party spoke. It makes us wonder about the kind of support that these Members are giving to their own constituents who are concerned about this issue.

I shall refer specifically to Motion No. 35, Mr. Speaker, to would amend Clause 17(4) of the Bill which now reads as follows:

The Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may enter into agreements to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport where, in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers.

Motion No. 35 would amend that by adding the following words:

"—but such agreements shall not provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport from shipping points on rail lines which have not been abandoned by order of the Canadian Transport Commission".

Very frankly, Mr. Speaker, this amendment is at best our third choice. Our first choice is to keep the Crow rate intact. We believe that this entire Bill is harmful to the prairie communities and to the Canadian economy in general. We would like to see the Government withdraw this Bill. That has been the basic intent of our Party and continues to be the basic intent of our Party. However, in some particular cases, we have some recommendations to make that would help to ease the hardship that this Bill will cause. Those recommendations represent our second choice.

With regard to the use of trucks to haul grain, our second choice was represented by Motion No. 34, which would have deleted the entire section, because we feel that subsidies to the trucking of grain will in fact be used to facilitate the abandonment of many branch lines on the Prairies by the railways. It is not true that we are trying to lock out the trucking industry; we simply do not want to subsidize it through branch line abandonment. We do not want to subsidize the trucking industry at the expense of many small communities that would suffer a great deal if the lines were abandoned.

● (1700)

I would like to quote briefly from the testimony of Mr. Charles Phelps, President of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, when he appeared before the Transport Committee in Regina on August 8, this year. He said:

Local governments are required to spend twice as much for road building and maintenance every time hauling mileage of farm products is doubled. Furthermore, rail line abandonment in many areas of Saskatchewan has become a significant contributor to the overall strain on the rural road system. This change has produced a direct reduction in the elevator delivery points in Saskatchewan, but has also concentrated traffic on some road lengths and added to the hauling distances.

Later in his testimony he said:

Continued rail line attrition will have a significant impact on municipalities' budget allocations and prioritization. There is no doubt in our mind that the

proposed Crow rate change will make necessary demands of the municipalities for additional services. Policing roads and enforcement of traffic load limits on each and every municipal road will become a necessity. This adds to the total cost of every rate payer within the municipality as well as to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. All additional direct costs, whether maintenance, construction, or reconstruction related, will affect the disposable income and the taxable income of the rural producer. As the costs escalate, greater discrepancies will occur rurally, and the family farm will be eliminated, never to return.

In this Party we hope that Members of the House will support Motion No. 34 which would eliminate Clause 17(4) altogether. If it is not supported, then we urge upon the House the wisdom and justice of Motion No. 35, which also stands in the name of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin).

Motion No. 35 would limit subsidies to truckers to those areas which are not presently served by branch lines. We do not want to pay for a system of subsidies that will subvert the basic life of the community and will subvert the transportation system already in place. Some of my colleagues have pointed out the links between some trucking companies and the CPR. It is a well known fact that if any subsidies are available, Canadian Pacific will find some way to get its hands on them. It is a fact that over the years Canadian Pacific has received a total of \$106 million in subsidies and 43 million acres of land for building the railway and putting the infrastructure in place. Now it wants to get out of its agreements and be subsidized for introducing a system of trucking.

I was interested in the speech given by the Hon. Member for Vegreville who brought up the question of bridge washouts. I would be interested to know where he was when this issue came up and was answered in committee on September 8.

Mr. Towers: He was there.

Mr. Manly: He might have been there, but it would have been helpful if he had paid attention to the question and answer. The Hon. Member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker) asked the same basic question as follows:

The problem I see with Mr. Benjamin's subamendment "shall not from the primary elevator system" is that in my riding there is a branch line that goes down to Cardston, which is quite a ways off the Lethbridge-Medicine Hat line, and periodically the bridge goes out, and it seems to me that under those circumstances your subamendment would block the administrator from paying for that grain to go from the Cardston primary elevator.

The Hon. Member for Regina West answered that by saying—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair hesitates to interrupt the Hon. Member but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There does not appear to be unanimous consent.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently and with some concern to the debate on Motion