

[Translation]

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James):** Mr. Speaker, the House is not ready for the question. I would like to contribute a few comments to this debate, and I shall try to do so in French, because there are people in Western Canada who speak French, and they should also be able to listen to these proceedings in their own language.

The point or points I would like to raise here are as follows: Why is this debate so important and why does our Party want to continue this debate on the Crow rate? Mr. Speaker, the question before the House is the following: Who is going to pay for the changes the Government wants to introduce in the House? There are only two groups that can pay for these changes. First, the CPR, the railways, and second, the farmers, since these changes must be paid for by someone. The question is who?

We get the impression on this side of the House that the Government wants western farmers to pay for the changes it is proposing. Is that fair, Mr. Speaker?

Both the CPR and the farmers have received subsidies from the people of Canada and the Government. Subsidies to the CPR will continue. There is no proposal before the House to take away from the CPR the subsidies it has received to build railroads in this country. But why is the Government proposing to take subsidies away from farmers? Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the Government wants to make farmers pay more for grain transport in this country when it is seeing the results of these changes and wants to give more money to the CPR. Why, Mr. Speaker?

I have the impression that the Government is listening to the CPR bosses, to the detriment of our farmers.

We want to continue the debate in the House because we want to convince the Government it should listen to western farmers. The Government must realize that this legislation is going to cost farmers a lot. For instance, some farmers in the West have very modest incomes, as low as \$9,000 or \$12,000. They cannot afford a drastic increase in the cost of grain transport.

The Government wants to convince Canadians that the Crow rate has to be changed in order to upgrade the railroads.

Mr. Speaker, that is not a good reason and it is not the truth. If there is a good reason to invest in the railroads, those investments will pay for themselves. That is what investments are supposed to do, Mr. Speaker. An investment will pay for itself, and changing the Crow rate is just an excuse for the Government. The Government wants to convince Canadians that it has to change the Crow rate in order to have investments in the railroads. That is unnecessary, Mr. Speaker, because in this country, we need a better transportation system, and those investments are necessary, regardless of any changes in the Crow rate.

Mr. Speaker, there are other means of transportation, where people may be paying a certain price in one area and another price in another area. For instance, in our big cities, we have a

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public transit system, we have buses, and while it costs more to carry a passenger who has a long way to go, everyone using public transit pays the same rate, regardless of the distance covered. We can reason that it costs less to run a bus over a short distance than over a long distance, but we are still charging all passengers using urban public transit the same price.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can have one rate for grain transport and another rate for other products. We have to subsidize farmers in our country because farmers in other countries are subsidized, and if ours are going to compete with farmers in other countries, they need those subsidies. In those countries . . . Here, subsidies have traditionally been for transport costs because our grain growers are located at a great distance from their markets.

Mr. Speaker, we in this Party believe that it is possible to maintain subsidies to farmers while at the same time increasing investment in the railroads. We must do both, and it is not fair to tell Canadians that we have to change the Crow rate to get any investment in the railroads.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has swallowed the reasons given by the CPR. The CPR wants us to change the Crow rate at a time when it is important to our farmers that the rate stays where it is today.

• (1740)

[English]

**Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on an issue which is most important to my constituents and to myself as a farmer. I have spent a good deal of my life trying to raise grain, and have experienced some of the difficulties of farming, as well as being a Member of Parliament for almost 11 years. Time and time again I experience the difficulty in the House that every time we have been faced with an important issue to western Canada in the last couple of years we have been speaking under one form of closure or another. Therefore, it has been very difficult to express in a proper manner the issues which are important to those of us from western Canada who are affected not only personally but whose constituents are affected as well. Neither the Minister nor Liberal Members of Parliament are here to listen to debate under a closure motion. The Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) mentioned that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) has spent some time listening to this debate, but basically we have to speak to all those Members because the Bill has been changed many times from its inception until it was presented in the House.

If they had to face farmers in Wetaskiwin at a Crow rate meeting, they would realize that their frustrations are abundantly clear. They are not certain what the Government is proposing and they are not certain about their future. At this time they are facing very difficult cost problems versus the