

Western Grain Transportation Act

The record of the CPR is dismal in terms of providing an adequate rail bed for both transportation of passengers and of freight. As an Hon. Member whose riding includes the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway system, I can speak from some experience in terms of how the CPR has neglected the needs of that rail system both for the transportation of bulk products and for passengers.

What the Government is doing with this Bill is simply adding greater subsidies on top of the estimated \$13.5 billion which the CPR has received over the past many decades, with no equity for the Canadian public. Bill C-155 could adequately have been split. It could have protected the rural communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta. It could have provided an adequate rail transportation system for products in my Province of British Columbia. We have seen the neglect of the CPR in anticipating increased demands. We have seen the neglect by the Liberal Government of the Canadian public and this Parliament through a hurried debate without giving any recognition of what the prairie farmers themselves have to impart to this House of Commons. The need for rail upgrading, Mr. Speaker, is recognized by everyone in this House. It would appear, however, that the Official Opposition is quite satisfied that this Bill go through. It is quite satisfied to see the final debate on second reading of this Bill conclude without putting up any more speakers this evening. It is quite prepared to see the western farmer pay the extra \$6,000 a year by the year 1990 without trying to force this Government to split the Bill and to recognize that rail upgrading and prairie grain transportation costs can be achieved without ruining the western economy.

The obvious difficulty in dealing with a Bill of this nature, in terms of the perception which the public has, is that there are some aspects of it we can all support. There are other aspects which none of us can support. Certainly, the New Democratic Party has difficulty with the way in which this rail upgrading is going to be financed from the public purse without any equity.

● (1840)

We are very concerned that the coal lands in British Columbia are going to remain under federal jurisdiction. Despite the failure of the Government, through the refusal to maintain the Crow rate, it would appear these lands are going to remain in the hands of the federal Government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we cannot tolerate a situation in which prairie farmers are going to have a significant decrease in the amount of income they and their families can expect.

Mr. Laverne Lewycky (Dauphin-Swan River): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to put on record certain things pertaining to this particular debate. I find it particularly repulsive that the Hon. Member for Rosemont (Mr. Lachance) moved closure on a motion which gives Members like myself, who are seriously affected, the opportunity of trying to convince my hon. friends opposite of the drastic affect this Bill will have on people in my constituency. I want

to outline several of the reasons I feel that way. I want to update some of the information I gave earlier in the House regarding the disproportionate impact of this measure on constituencies such as mine.

Within the last week I was able to obtain a 1982 Government of Manitoba report which tabulates the average income of certain constituencies. The Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex (Mr. Ferguson) said that every farmer could afford \$2,800. I would point out the disproportionate impact that would have in the town of Benito, for example. The average annual income in that town for the year 1980 was \$6,911. If you took \$2,800 away from that, I would ask my hon. friends opposite what kind of impact that would have, and what impact it would have in their constituencies? In the town of Ethelbert, which is half way between Dauphin and Swan River, the average annual income is \$6,060.

I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that Hon. Members opposite might at least give me the courtesy of listening to what I have to say.

Mr. Benjamin: They are busy playing cards.

Mr. Lewycky: If not, maybe they could at least excuse themselves.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. Clearly, the conversation taking place on my left is not very helpful to the Hon. Member who was recognized by the Chair. I would therefore ask Hon. Members to lower their voices somewhat.

[*English*]

Mr. Lewycky: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as I said, Ethelbert is a town with an average annual income in 1980 of \$6,060. If you take away the \$2,800 that the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex suggests is not much, what type of income would be left for these people on which to survive? I would also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, that this average annual income includes the wife and children, who are unpaid labour. We are talking about communities where the wife does not have the opportunity of obtaining a second income for the family. Even if people from farming communities such as Ethelbert were to try and get a job in the service sector they would have to travel up to 60 miles one way to work in let us say, a restaurant or some other area of the service sector. We are saying that the deduction of \$2,800 from the annual income of people in my constituency will have a very disproportionate impact.

I could go on and list several other communities which would be affected in the same way. For example, we have Langruth which presently pays, under the Crow rate, some 16 cents a hundredweight. The elevator handles 8,700 tonnes. At 5.1 times Crow, that community would suffer a loss of \$125,900.

I could point out the impact this Bill will have on all the elevators in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, but it would be difficult for my friends in urban constituencies to understand what this would mean. However, Mr. Speaker, instead of going