

Western Grain Transportation Act

the Government came up with its own proposal. This led the people of western Canada to believe that something would be forthcoming from the Government but these hopes have been dashed.

I have to warn you, Mr. Speaker, that 30 years ago grain prices were almost the same as they are today. The only way farmers have survived in western Canada is through their efficiency. They have made their operations so efficient that they have been able to survive. But I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that they are approaching the breaking point. There is no room for them to stretch any more. The cost of their operations has gone up about tenfold in the last 30 years.

Hon. Members opposite do not seem to realize that ultimately the western grain producer has to sell his grain on the Third World market. The Third World is \$600 billion or \$700 billion in debt and cannot afford the extra cost of the grain. Just the other day the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) pointed out that a lot of the Government's premises are based on \$8 barley and \$12 wheat. That is fine; the western grain grower could stay in business with those prices but when he has to sell to the Third World countries at a price they can afford, there is no room left. The world market sets the price for grain.

The Government says that the railroads are going to assess the farmer exactly what they consider to be the cost of moving that grain. This is something which I never did like about the Snively report because it simply took into consideration the figures which the railroad provided. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), touched on that.

● (1200)

We cannot accept that, Mr. Speaker, because there has to be room in there somewhere for improvement. There must be a guarantee that there is going to be some improvement. For instance, when Dr. Hugh Horner was on the Grain Transportation Authority and he went out to examine what was happening on the West Coast, he mentioned—and I have confirmed with some railroad officials that it could happen—that there were 50 switches on one trainload of grain required in order to get that grain unloaded. To me, that is ridiculous. It is ridiculous for the CNR to pull their grain trains in, unhook its engines, and put on the CPR engines because the unloading facilities are on CPR tracks. That is absolutely ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, and there is no guarantee that the grain producer in western Canada is going to be protected against that. My goodness gracious, I would not be surprised if we could cut the cost of moving that grain in half if there were people in there who had the desire, the knowledge and were required to improve the system. That is what is needed. That guarantee must be in the system, Mr. Speaker. We cannot put our producers at the feet of the railroads, which is exactly what the Minister has done. He has turned his back on the western grain producers. We cannot allow that to happen, and to whatever extreme we must go in order to protect those producers, I hope you will understand we are doing it for their

protection and we have the backing of 100 per cent of the western farmers.

I appreciate the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, of explaining this to you at this time and I hope that the Hon. Members opposite will be cognizant of what the real issues are—that the grain producers must have some protection and cannot undertake any extra costs at the present time because too many of them are going broke already.

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, I have a sense of *déjà vu* today because it was in an all-night emergency debate involving western grain transportation that I first rose to speak in the House of Commons. I remember very well that it had to do with the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. There was great indignation at that time about the Minister of Transport, the Hon. Otto Lang, having bypassed the Western Grain Stabilization Act, or having anticipated it, as I recall, bringing forward a policy which raised the ire and indignation of many Members on this side of the House, including Members from eastern Canada. I remember in those days—and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) will remember also—the famous LIFT Program, “Lower Inventory for Tomorrow”. That was going to be the panacea for western grain producers. Actually, it turned out to be one of the worst programs which was ever implemented.

Mr. Mazankowski: “Lower income for tomorrow”.

Mr. MacKay: It was lower income for tomorrow instead of lower inventory, as the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) has pointed out.

I get the feeling as I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing another Minister of Transport, this time from the eastern part of our country, dealing with western problems relating to transport and the growing of wheat who will also find that his policies are exactly what was not needed at this particular time. I ask as an interested Member of Parliament, how will we monitor the railways to see that the vast amounts of money which they are paid are expended for the purposes which this legislation envisages? At a time when we are still undergoing a very fragile recovery of our economy, how is this going to help the western grain producers and, indeed, the heavy equipment producers who are going to be victimized by increased costs of transportation?

I was here in the House the other day when the Hon. Member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn) pointed out, as I recall, that two industries with which he was very concerned, namely, Massey-Ferguson and White Farm Equipment, are going to be victimized because of the adverse consequences he sees as implicit in this piece of legislation. I believe many of us tend to look upon this as merely a piece of legislation dealing with the Crow, as the media and the public are wont to call it. It is really much more than that. It has to do with the fabric of our national transportation policy. The tendency of this Government to change and manipulate programs and institutions, often without a clear understanding of the effects and the proper perspective of the final product, I believe, is what is