

of British Columbia has never done a tremendously good job of providing good highways for the people of Lake Cowichan anyhow.

There would be an increased use of energy. I am not sure about the shipment of grain, but for shipping lumber, approximately four times as much energy is required to ship lumber by truck as to ship by train. By putting more traffic, especially heavy truck traffic, on already crowded highways, we would be increasing the danger of accidents. I know the difficulty of trying to drive on some of those highways on Vancouver Island with some of those large, articulated trailer trucks, with both lumber and logs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I think the Hon. Member is straying somewhat from the purpose of the amendment now before the House. The Bill, I remind him, deals basically with the transport of grain. He is now speaking of lumber on Vancouver Island. I would invite him to come back to the amendment.

Mr. Manly: I am very pleased to come back to the amendment, Mr. Speaker, but I was trying to use the situation on Vancouver Island as an illustration of the fact that branch line abandonment all across Canada does have a disastrous effect upon communities. In fact, when we consider the social, environmental and the total economic costs, it really argues against abandonment. Clause 17(4) is basically a move to facilitate branch line abandonment. While it talks about being "in the best interests of the grain producers", it is in fact not.

● (1125)

In returning to the point, I would like to emphasize that, if anything, the situation is more critical for communities on the Prairies than it is even in my own riding. I suggest that it is clauses such as this which make people on the Prairies very suspicious about the intent of the entire Bill to change the basic Crow structure. They see this Bill as an attempt to destroy the infrastructure which has been built up over the years, including not only the branch lines but the local elevators that will be left unserved by those branch lines as trucks are used to haul grain directly to the larger inland terminals. Branch line abandonment would be served by giving subsidies to trucking so that they would be able to syphon off increased volumes of grain hauling. The trucking firms which would get the subsidy would obtain more of this business and that, in turn, would result in lesser use of the branch lines, which would ultimately lead to the promotion of the argument by the railways that the branch lines themselves were not successful.

Therefore it is on that basis that we in our Party are very concerned that Motion No. 34 to withdraw Clause 17(4) be accepted and that the Government commit itself to maintain the infrastructure that is needed on the Canadian Prairies so that those communities, those farms and services, will continue.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into the debate on our motion which I believe all Members of the House should support if they closely review

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the economics of our reasoning. Motion No. 34 specifically seeks to strike from the Bill Clause 17(4), which is a provision to facilitate branch line abandonment, the closing of country elevators and the development of a system of inland terminals through a diversion of a portion of funds available for transportation subsidies to trucking.

I understand that this measure evolved from the proposals put forward by the Tory Transport critic, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), in some ways supported by the Deputy Minister of Transport, to get back in the Bill a means of providing subsidies to the various trucking companies that would ordinarily be going to the railways.

I believe that most people who have followed the debate closely know that the general impact of the Crow changes on the Prairies will mean a loss of 30,000 or 40,000 of the smaller rural farms, particularly in northern and more rural areas. In some cases, these areas are not even served by branch lines but are basically being served presently by some form of trucking into the rural elevators, on to the branch lines and on into the central pools to the eventual destination of Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Churchill or the Lakehead.

I believe all Members need to be reminded from time to time of what is happening in terms of the consolidation of certain trucking interests who are very clearly interested in seeing this kind of Crow Bill go through unchanged. Clearly, they would not want to see the NDP amendment accepted and would prefer to see the special deal that has been made between the Tories and the Liberals go through.

I believe it is worth reflecting on the announcement which was made in March of this year and was noted in a story by Albert Sigurdson in a story in *The Globe and Mail*. The headline was "Trucking: CN Now Runs the Nation's Biggest Trucking Network". All that delayed CN from getting that trucking network up to that point was obtaining "the missing link operating licences it needed in Quebec". What CN is now operating in Canada is some 3,000 pieces of highway equipment. They claim this is the most efficient and effective marketing operation for trucking in the country.

● (1130)

There are three key areas we have to look at if we are going to pass this part of the Crow Bill unamended. I believe, and my colleagues from the Prairies also believe, that we need to have Clause 34 changed in the way that we have proposed to take away the possibility of trucking companies picking up the freight subsidies. In our estimation, three key things will occur if the trucking companies can dig in, whether it is CN, which is now the largest trucking network in the country, CP or any other operation. These three things are branch line abandonment, elevator abandonment and the massive development of inland terminals.

Let me deal first with branch line abandonment, something that has been occurring at a great rate for many years. Branch line abandonment would be compounded by allowing federal funds, particularly federal subsidies, to go to trucking companies, which in some cases may be more efficient. I am certainly