

Western Grain Transportation Act

According to the respected and honest Chris Mills of the Alberta cattle industry, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is opposed to this measure. The Prime Minister indicated to the farmers in Jasper the other night that it was a bad measure, but since votes could not be guaranteed to the Liberal Party, it was going ahead. Indeed, to my knowledge no organization or person anywhere in Canada supports this Bill except for the Prime Minister and therefore, of course, his caucus.

It is the wrong time for this legislation because prairie farmers are now facing increased costs and dropping incomes. As others have pointed out, this Liberal measure is taking approximately \$160 million out of prairie prairie pockets by 1985-86 and a billion dollars by 1991-92. Our towns and cities in western Canada will suffer. Not only will our people suffer but those in central Canada who make cars, furniture and other commodities will suffer because of this measure.

In the time remaining I would like to give some reasons why I think this measure is profoundly bad for Canada and particularly for the West. The Bill will accelerate the decline of the meat packing industry in western Canada. I am told that not too many years ago the meat packing industry was the largest employer of people in the City of Edmonton. The Gainers plant in my riding was closed a few years ago. The Burns plant in Edmonton closed in 1979, taking 700 jobs with it.

Elsewhere in western Canada closings included the Burns plant in Prince Albert in 1976 with 500 jobs lost; Canadian Dressed Meats in Medicine Hat in 1978 with 120 jobs lost; Swifts in Winnipeg in 1979 with 550 jobs lost; Burns in Regina in 1974 with 200 jobs lost. As well, Gainers in Lethbridge is now closed for an undetermined time with any number of jobs lost.

Furthermore, the Bill reduces the opportunities in western Canada for further diversification. Incidentally, unemployment in Edmonton is now above 12 per cent. Yet the forecast yesterday by the Conference Board of Canada said that lower gas prices and rising consumer confidence had boosted the general economic prospects of all Provinces except Alberta. The report also indicated that Alberta's prospects have dimmed considerably in response to energy market developments. The same report noted that Ontario and Quebec would benefit most from increased consumer demands. As a Canadian I wish the people of Ontario and Quebec nothing but prosperity. However, it will not go unnoticed that the big loser in this Bill is once again economic development in western Canada.

I will skip what the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) said about this Bill being one of the three most important measures introduced since this Government came to office. The National Energy Program, which he included among those three measures, has had approximately the same effect on western Canada as the bubonic plague. For a Minister to say that the National Energy Program was good for Canada as a whole or for western Canada is self-evident nonsense.

Bill C-155 freezes in concrete the existing distortion in low freight rates for grains and oil seeds against those for processed products. The Bill will cost livestock producers \$20 a tonne in extra costs to effect the subsidy of grain producers. According to the Minister's own words, the distortion will result in a loss of an additional \$1 billion in livestock production and an additional \$350 million worth of economic activity with respect to processing, packing plants and the feed mill industry in western Canada.

Our producers should be guaranteed an efficient, cost effective and reliable grain transportation system. Anyone who studies economics in western Canada knows that the railways were given basically downtown western Canada. I do not think it is necessary to turn around and give them another very rich gift from the taxpayers of Canada.

I see you are getting ready to stand, Mr. Speaker, so on behalf of urban western Canada I would strongly object to this measure.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S.O. 21

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
AGREEMENT TO MAKE MANITOBA OFFICIALLY BILINGUAL

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on an agreement in principle of historical importance that has been reached by leaders of the Société franco-manitobaine and the Government of Manitoba with the Federal Government, with a view to making that province officially bilingual. The agreement includes a proposal for a constitutional amendment which would modify Section 23 of the Manitoba Act (1870) regarding the use of French and/or English in the proceedings and documents of the legislature and before the courts.

The House will remember that in 1979, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that a law passed in 1890, by which English was proclaimed the Official Language of this Province, was unconstitutional. The 1979 judgment therefore restored the officially bilingual status of Manitoba. Since this landmark judgment, negotiations have been taking place between the Franco-Manitoban community and the Provincial