

Western Grain Transportation Act

this looked after by the Minister. What a set up! We have the Minister dancing to the tune of the railways, using the taxpayers' money to build equipment and lease it. The Government now has the gall, when it is going to change the Crowsnest Agreement, to say it should be taken away from the Wheat Board and other groups which lease it and put under the control of the Minister.

We in the New Democratic Party know exactly what is going on. While the Conservatives sit here and take their \$50,000 in donations a year from Canadian Pacific and the Liberals take theirs, they are allowing these kinds of things to take place. They have had 14 speakers this evening and we have had 21, yet their House Leader calls them the Official Opposition.

I want to go on with what is happening with this railway equipment. I worked for the railways for over 35 years and I know how the system works. I know how they had the Canadian taxpayers build new cars to supply their demands which they would not live up to. They also had literally hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade their own equipment, and this was done in a shabby way, not really having done what was supposed to be done to meet the needs. The Wheat Pools and the Government of Canada had to come into the system and start building the cars in order that the demands could be met.

In my riding of Kootenay East-Revelstoke, CP Rail signed an agreement with a Japanese company for the sale of coal. How quickly they obtained their equipment and rolling stock and got ready to meet that demand because it suited their needs and their profits! We in this Party realize there is more to Canada than just shipping coal and lumber. Grain is a very important part of our economy, and the purpose of this Bill is to ensure that the administration of these cars will come under the Wheat Board.

If it ever gets to the point where the Minister handles it and administers it, what is to stop the railways from leaving the cars on sidings for weeks on end and then coming back to the Government and saying that they need more cars? I guess the Government of Canada will have to build more cars. When is this going to stop?

If we are speaking about legislation that is going to have some impact on the shipment of grains in Canada, then we must have the group involved in the sale of wheat and the production of grain and other commodities onstream and able to administer. They must have the authority to carry out their plans to meet their needs at very specific times.

The Conservative Party sits there with its one hundred and some Members, and only 14 of its Members showed concern for the farmers. Early in 1982 I was a Member of the Transport Committee which travelled across Canada. We heard the concerns of many of the farmers with regard to the allocation of cars. The former Progressive Conservative Minister of Transport, the Hon. Member for Vegreville, was there. He openly bragged about the cars and the equipment that he had made available for grain transportation during his administration. His administration lasted exactly nine months, but he talked about all the boxcars that he had built and the

equipment that he had upgraded in order to meet the needs of the grain farmer. It takes a lot longer than nine months to carry out that kind of program, build that equipment and get the various groups involved. The ones who took the initiative were not in the Conservative Party. It was the grain growers, the Wheat Board and the Wheat Pools. They realized what had to be done and took the initiative to ensure that it was done. Therefore, for them to try to take that kind of credit is shameful.

For us to be discussing the leasing of this equipment which will be taken away from the control of the Wheat Board and put into the hands of the Minister is absolutely ludicrous. We on this side know that these amendments will not have a chance to be properly discussed, let alone voted on by the Liberals. They have told us there will not be any more amendments passed. These amendments are not going to pass because the Liberals have already made their sweetheart deal with the railway systems in Canada. We have to be able to speak about this. For that reason I am pleased we have had some extra hours so that we could speak on each one of these clauses and about these amendments. It is important to get it on the record to show exactly who is fighting for the Canadian farmers and the Canadian people. If we do not do that and allow this kind of legislation to go through we will find the prairie farmers going bankrupt five to seven years in the future, and we will see the Government of that day coming to the House looking for help for the farmers. After giving it all to the railways the Government will return five years from now to say that it needs help for the farmers. The taxpayers of Canada will have to provide the extra money to help the farmers. We will see the old see-saw back and forth between the railroads and the Wheat Board.

● (0045)

This is very serious legislation. No Member should say that we should not be debating it. The amendments go to the very root of what is being discussed in the House. Each of these amendments is very important to our Party and we will make sure that everyone in the country knows exactly what is happening.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Would the Hon. Member allow a question?

Mr. Parker: I would be happy to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member has a minute and a half for the question. The Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn).

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Before asking the question I should say that I was quite impressed by the enthusiasm with which the Hon. Member addressed this issue and I welcome him to the debate which has taken place. In view of the fact that he has strenuously put forward his personal position with respect to this legislation, and has done so with force and effect in the debate on this occasion, and in view of his great interest in this legislation, would he explain why he attended none of the