

find out if the Province of British Columbia has shown any interest.

It seems to have been part and parcel of the Conservative attack on every aspect of the Western Grain Transportation Act—an attack that was apparently motivated more by politics than by any real concern for the people of western Canada.

The proof of this would appear to be their acceptance of almost all of the act since becoming the government. The Conservative motto on the Western Grain Transportation Act seems to be: "Let's forgive and forget."

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Steuart: Honourable senators, there is one promise the Tory prime minister made that farmers will not forget, nor will they forgive him for breaking it. I refer to his promise to freeze the farmers' rates for moving grain at the 1983-84 level. The Conservatives now claim that Bill C-44 fulfills this promise. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The amendments in this bill provide for a freight rate ceiling for producers which will not exceed the 1984-85 rate level in the 1985-86 and 1986-87 crop years.

Hon. David Walker: Would the honourable senator permit a question?

Senator Steuart: Certainly.

Senator Walker: His Lordship has been waiting nearly two hours to enter this chamber. He then has to call in the House of Commons. Did the honourable senator not say, earlier, that he was in favour of this bill? If so, is it necessary that he finish his manuscript? Although I love to hear him speak—

Senator Steuart: If you were to sit down, Senator Walker, things would proceed more quickly. I am almost finished. If I were a Tory, I would not blame you for getting up and trying to stop me from telling the truth about this phoney piece of window dressing. If you don't mind, I will finish. As Joe Louis said, you can run but you can't hide.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Steuart: Where was I? The amendments in this bill provide for a freight rate ceiling for producers which will not exceed the 1984-85 rate level in the 1985-86 and 1986-87 crop years. This means that producers will not pay more than their existing rate, which currently averages \$7.70 a tonne in the next two crop years.

● (2330)

Honourable senators, that is the Conservative government's rate freeze that they claim keeps their promise made to the farmers in 1984.

I remind you that the Tory commitment was to freeze rates at the 1983-84 level and not at the 1984-85 level which is 22 per cent higher than the previous year.

Senator Walker: No!

Senator Steuart: Yes, Senator Walker. The truth shall make them free and the farmers will know that. The rate was raised on August 1, 1984 a few weeks before the present government

was elected—I admit that—raised under the Liberals. The present government was elected in September and had they intended to keep that promise, steps should have been taken to roll back the rates to the 1983-84 level, but they failed to act, so the rates increased by 20 per cent, costing western farmers more than \$50 million.

Just listen to this, Senator Walker: What happened a few weeks ago was that the Honourable Don Mazankowski attempted to pull off a little sleight of hand. Obviously, he learned that the Canadian Transport Commission was about to announce the rates for the coming crop year, 1985-86, and that these would be 22 per cent lower than the rates for 1984-85. He rushed the bill into the house for first reading on April 26, 1985 because he knew that if he waited his so-called freeze would be exposed as the farce that it really is.

Senator Walker: Really!

Senator Steuart: Knowing the rates were being dropped, he brought in a bill stating that the rates for the next two years could not exceed the rates coming into effect August 1, 1985. He was also aware that because of our low grain stocks it is very unlikely that next year's rates will reach the high level of 1984-85, so this freeze will expire without providing any help to farmers or costing the Conservative government one cent. If they had frozen the rates at the 1983-84 levels, it would have meant something. Even if they had frozen the rates at the 1985-86 levels, it would have meant something. But by choosing the 1984-85 rates—the high point in the cycle—the minister is giving nothing to western farmers. His freeze is meaningless and the minister is trying to take credit for a rate reduction which occurred naturally under the act.

Honourable senators, let me point out that it was not just Mr. Mulroney and Mr. Mazankowski who made this commitment but in this chamber on November 17, 1983, Senator Asselin, who has now moved to higher planes, moved the following amendment to Bill C-155. He said then:

Honourable senators, because of the producers' current inability to pay what they would be called upon to pay by this legislation, and because the railway companies—

Note that, Senator Sinclair:

—do not need the extensive help at this time that the legislation before us would afford them, I move, seconded by Senator Macdonald, that clause 41 of Bill C-155 be amended as follows—

Then he mentioned a renumbering of a clause, but the intent of the amendment was:

Notwithstanding anything in this Act, the rate a railway company may charge a shipper for the movement of grain for the period January 1, 1984 to July 31, 1986 shall not exceed the existing rates in effect on August 1, 1983.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: It was a good amendment.

Senator Steuart: It was a good amendment and you believed in it then, and what happened to you on the way since then? You lost your faith, that's what happened.