

There is nothing within the penalty clause that suggests that the railways have to deliver grain. As a matter of fact, if CN decides not to deliver it, it will not. If it has a shortfall, it will come before Parliament. Where is the penalty there?

I expect the railways, like every other segment of our economy, will try to become more efficient. The NDP is a motherhood type Party which has always wanted to associate itself with the good aspects of all issues. Members of that Party want to be on the side of the unions and on the side of the farmers at the same time. Whose side are you on? Are you on the side of the farmers who have to pay the rates or are you not?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Guy Dubois (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, in speaking to Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, perhaps I may remind the House that some time ago, Members of the Quebec caucus formed a sub-committee to consider this situation. After the Gilson Report was published and after the Government's statement on August 4, 1982 regarding the Report, Members of the Quebec caucus met with various agricultural organizations—the local organizations in their respective ridings and also provincial and national organizations—in order to discuss the situation.

It is true that to people in Eastern Canada, the Crow rate seems to be a typically western problem. However, after publication of the Gilson Report and its assessment in collaboration with the Yvan Jacques Committee at Agriculture Canada, many Quebec farmers realized that the Crow rate issue did affect them, and that grain supplies from Western Canada were very important to the agricultural industry in Quebec, I should say Eastern Canada, but if I may be allowed to speak specifically about Quebec, since I represent a Quebec riding, I think that many farmers have realized that the Crow issue had considerable repercussions on agriculture in Quebec.

Not that they were necessarily ignorant before, but just because the system had been in place since 1897 and Canadians, especially in Eastern Canada, had been getting wheat from Western Canada as well as other related products for animal feed. As soon as the Gilson Report was published, however, many people started asking a lot of questions, and that is why my colleagues in the Quebec caucus and myself started meeting last fall, in September, with the main agricultural organizations in Quebec. At a special caucus meeting in Jonquière, we listened to representations from farmers to find out what could happen as a result of this situation.

Bill C-155 is before the House today. From the outset, Members of the Quebec caucus met with the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) who received their representations, and today, now that Bill C-155 has been printed, I must say that the Minister did listen to us and that he did see what he could do in terms of this Bill and this new policy.

Western Grain Transportation Act

Mr. Speaker, I am very much tempted to make my speech even more political, by the fact that in May 1980, certain Quebec Government authorities, in referring to the referendum, said that we could be independent and that we would no longer have any problems, that our standard of living would be adequate and that our problems would no longer exist. I think the grain transportation issue is a good example of the fact that Canada must be seen as a whole, and that the various regions depend on one another, and that if western grain is sent to Quebec, it is because Quebec is extremely dependent on western grain production for the survival of its livestock operations. That is one example I am fond of giving the farmers in my area and in Quebec. I tell them that that it is very important to be a part of Canada, this great country of ours, and that we have every reason to be proud and that we must find within this country the sources of supply we need. Today, as a result, we are only 40 per cent self-sufficient as far as grain production is concerned. That is why some people say we should strive for self-sufficiency in Quebec. However, although it seems very sensible, it would be impossible because of our soil and weather conditions.

• (1600)

That is why, Mr. Speaker, considering the situation as reported in Bill C-155, I am giving this Bill on western grain transportation my wholehearted support. I would also like to mention that as a result of certain representations that were made to us, the method of payment has been one of the important points we have been discussing with many agricultural organizations since last September. In November, we invited representatives of the FPU, the Coopérative fédérée and the feedmill operators to meet us at a Quebec caucus meeting, which was held on November 24, and where we discussed the Crow rate issue with the agricultural organizations. Of course we had to do some research, we had to continue our discussions and meetings, and personally, Mr. Speaker, I and my colleagues had regular meetings with farmers and farm associations. On January 19, 1983, I made a statement under Standing Order 21, in which I announced to our farmers that we had set up a sub-committee. I gave the names of Members who were present and who were working on a Bill that would be tabled in the House, the Bill we are considering today. In fact, my colleagues from Rimouski-Témiscouata (Mrs. Côté), Chicoutimi (Mr. Dionne), Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ostiguy), Portneuf (Mr. Dion), Lévis (Mr. Gourde), Beauce (Mr. Lapointe), Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Gimaël), Mégantic-Compton-Stanstead (Mr. Tessier), Richmond-Wolfe (Mr. Tardif), and myself as chairman, have been working on this issue since last fall.

In Quebec, many people were concerned about the fact, and said so, that federal Members did not seem to be interested in this issue. I would like to say that here in the House and in committee we have been working for quite some time with the Ministers concerned to produce this Bill. We had meetings