

Western Grain Transportation Act

of the NDP. There is always a dollar left over as a result of efficiency, so there can be a social heart and concern. It is just utter nonsense to hear people say we should spend more money to keep up inefficient policies because of a social conscience. One does not have to be a socialist to have a social conscience. But one must be able to recognize that if one can operate a society with efficiency, then the wealth in the nation is assured and one is able to have that social conscience.

We must look at the fact, then, that it takes approximately 60,000 bushels of grain per mile to make a railway efficient. We do have some branch lines in which trucking would operate very efficiently. That gives different options and alternatives. From 1974 to 1979 the then Minister of Transport, Otto Lang, removed 2,300 miles of branch lines from the Prairies. I submit to you, Sir, that had the NDP policy been in place then, none of those people on the abandoned branch lines would have had any option. Their railway would have been gone. There would have been no support for trucking. Those communities would have shrivelled and died. That would have been the answer of the NDP.

When the facts dictate it is more efficient to move by truck, and the Grain Transportation Authority makes that judgment, then the trucking mechanism should be available. There is lots of business for the railways. There can be flexibility. It may well be that farmers will not easily be able to get rid of some of their wheat because it will not sell for export or for flour, but he will then have the choice of selling it to a nearby feedlot and he will be able to use the trucking system to deliver to a place where the railway does not run.

I submit to you therefore, Sir, that the argument which has been put forward by the Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald), as well as other Members of the NDP, that what the Government is really doing is shedding itself of a federal burden and transferring it to the Provinces, is not the main point. It is not the dispute between the federal and provincial governments; it is the case that there is only one taxpayer. That taxpayer wants the most efficient transportation system irrespective of how it is accomplished.

The argument which should be made is that, while we will pay a certain amount of money for the maintenance of railway beds, the railway grain lines move one commodity. When one spends money for highways, one not only moves grain but uses those highways for many other purposes.

● (1220)

Basically, Mr. Speaker, the rail system is used today when carload shipments are made. The lumber train hauls a full load of lumber, the potash train hauls a full load of potash. The same with coal, grain and the like. The days of a train hauling mail, groceries for the store, parts for the machinery shop and a few cream cans are long gone. I submit, Sir, that the cost burden which must fall on the grain producer for the shipping of grain in less than trainload quantities is such that, if there is a more economical option available to the Grain Transportation Authority, then surely the NDP would not deny that saving to the region involved.

The bottom line, Sir, is efficiency. We need to have the greatest level of efficiency possible, and rail is demonstrably most efficient only when you can move larger volumes. Many farmers will be denied service unless they are able to use the trucking option. It increases their ability to deliver products to markets other than export markets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some Hon. Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five Members having risen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Pursuant to Standing Order 79(11), a recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West) moved:

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-155 be amended in Clause 17 by striking out line 25 at page 8 and substituting the following therefor:

"the grain producers, but such agreements shall not provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport from shipping points on rail lines which have not been abandoned by order of the Canadian Transport Commission."

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I find it a little bit incongruous to be standing to speak to this motion because it assumes that Motion No. 34 is lost. I am sure that you, along with other Members of the House, will recognize that Motion No. 34 was really the key motion and that the arguments our Party made over the last couple of days on that motion have persuaded both the Liberals and Conservatives to vote for it. I am also sure that it is incomprehensible to the audience watching to have us arguing about a motion which assumes another motion has already been lost when we have not even voted on it. But such is the case so we have to argue as if Clause 17(4) has not been deleted.

I think to get the sense of this it is necessary to read the clause as well as the amendment. Clause 17(4) provides: