Western Grain Transportation Act

grain. I would like to point out in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, that there is a concept that I think should be expanded in an over-all planning process that would apply beyond only the transportation of grain. I might mention that in my riding and the ridings that surround the Port of Vancouver, there exists probably one of the worst examples of a bottleneck and inefficiency in the use of rail cars. This is of course because there are four different quite unrelated railways going through the area. For example, it often takes considerable time and expense to move railway cars from the north shore of the Port of Vancouver where there is B.C. rail connections some 45 miles around the total port area to connect to the inner port and transfer grain and other items to another rail system such as Burlington Northern.

● (1630)

I would like to point out also, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to making better use of rail cars, it is my understanding—and my colleague who is an expert on this will perhaps elaborate on this—that we also need more rail cars and we need Canadian-made rail cars. That is why I must put on the record again the fact that this Party feels that it was a great tragedy when the Social Credit Party in British Columbia closed down a B.C. rail car manufacturing plant in the Squamish area which was brought into being when our Party was in power in British Columbia. This is the kind of thing we do not need to see more of. If that plant had not been closed down, it would have provided more Canadian-made rail cars for Canadian domestic use as well as for export at a time when we really needed them.

Returning to Bill C-155 and this amendment, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that we need to make better use of rail cars right across Canada. We need an integrated and inter-changeable plan that would make the best use of tracks, regardless of whether those tracks belong to CN or CP Rail or, in the case of the Vancouver region, Great Northern Railway or British Columbia Railway. That would allow for the flexibility needed to combine partial loads of specialized grains into one load on whichever rail system seemed to be the most logical.

In British Columbia and in the area of the Port of Vancouver particularly, there exists a very complex and, I might say, extremely inefficient and unco-ordinated system, which sometimes makes me very fearful for my community when I think of some of the very dangerous goods that are transported on the rail systems.

As I pointed out, there are four different rail systems which are quite unrelated serving that port area. The Burlington Northern is an American rail system and is completely unaccountable to the local communities, the City of Vancouver or even to Canada, as far as I can see. I am thinking of a situation that occurred when there was a problem with noise pollution created by this railway. This problem was very disturbing to the surrounding community, especially to people who were trying to sleep at night. There was much shunting of cars and so on going on. We investigated every possible avenue

in our attempts to do something about this. Because it was an American rail system, the noise bylaws were apparently unenforceable. Similarly, the mothers in a public housing community in that particular area had a great fight on their hands when they were trying to get an overpass built over this railway so that their children could go to school without having to cross a dangerous track.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, Order, please. It seems to me that the Hon. Member, while raising valid points, is relating to matters incidental to the matters at hand. I do not know what term I should use, but she is sidetracking her remarks and not addressing them to the amendment. I would invite her to relate to the amendment, please.

Mrs. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point I was trying to make, by illustrating with some examples from my own experience in Vancouver, was that we need an integrated system. We certainly need an integrated system that will allow for the sharing of rail cars, but we also need to expand on that. I think that is very important because we are dealing with a Bill which is concerned with planning for the whole future transportation system particularly in western Canada.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill does practically nothing at all for the Port of Vancouver area. Not one cent of the moneys that the Liberals are proposing to put into rail improvements will go to improvements to relieve the congestion in the Port of Vancouver. I was trying to explain that the congestion is even worse there than in many other regions because of the complexity caused by four different rail systems.

My colleague from Regina spoke this morning about the high cost in inefficiency of having competitive railway systems. Again, the existence of four railway systems in Vancouver is certainly a very good example of what he was complaining about earlier. We need a very integrated planning and operation system, not just for rail cars but for the whole of the rail system.

I would like to devote a good part of my time, Mr. Speaker, to illustrate something that really is related to this Bill and certainly to this amendment. I would like to illustrate this point by referring to some of the documented evidence in a report entitled "Vancouver Rail Access Study, Phase I Report", which was prepared by a group called Travacon Research Limited. This report was prepared for the Provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba and for Transport Canada and the Canadian Transport Commission. It deals with the very serious bottleneck situation that occurs in the Port of Vancouver.

This Bill and this amendment will actually do very little to solve that bottleneck situation. I think it is very important that I document this because its principles are very important and relate to this Bill. The report attempts to document and identify the timing of potential future rail capacity shortfalls within Vancouver, not only for those that are occurring now. The bottleneck situation is bad right now, but this report deals