

Western Grain Transportation Act

the farm gate price. The Hon. Member for Vegreville wants to give them the freedom of choice to do that.

I will keep talking until you cut me off, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): If I understood the expression used earlier by the Hon. Member, he has run out of his string.

Mr. Benjamin: May I ask the Chair's generosity to continue—

Some Hon. Members: No!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I think I heard the Hon. Member indicate that he would like to seek unanimous consent to continue his remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): It is clear that there is not unanimous consent. On the matter of the amendment, the Hon. Member declared that he understood that the rules prohibit putting the amendment. I can do no more than assure him that he was correct in his assumption.

The question of whether it is a reasoned amendment is hypothetical. I would refer the Hon. Member to Citation 445 in Beauchesne's fifth edition to the effect there can be no amendment once the motion has been put for the previous question.

● (1830)

Mr. Ted Miller (Nanaimo-Alberni): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). I am surprised that the Official Opposition has taken this opportunity to remain silent on this very important Bill. It would look as though they have knuckled under to the Government's desire to push this Bill through quickly, despite the implications of Bill C-155 not only to the farmers in the Prairies, but certainly on the whole issue of transportation in western Canada. Obviously the resolve of the Conservative Party of Canada to see that this Bill adequately protects the grain farmers, as well as provides adequate transportation for mineral and forest products in western Canada, its resolve to fight this Bill and to see that the Government does not jeopardize the livelihood of western Canadian farmers, has evaporated in this House this day.

The Bill with which we are dealing will do a lot more than take approximately \$6,000 from each farm family by the year 1990. It jeopardizes the whole western farm future. As a Member from the Province of British Columbia I can say that we have concerns not only for the grain farmers in the Provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, we also have some very sincere concerns as to how changes to the Crow rate under this Bill will affect the producers of timber products, coal and other minerals in the Province of British Columbia.

There seems to be a perception, and a false one, that the New Democratic Party in fighting this Bill is jeopardizing

increased transportation. The proposition which we have attempted to put forward regarding Bill C-155 would split the Bill and would see the House of Commons deal with transportation, in the upgrading of the rail system which we know as woefully inadequate and antiquated. We would split this Bill in order to deal with transportation needs in Western Canada, to protect the farmers and the statutory Crow rate, and to deal with the infrastructure of western Canadian products. I believe this indicates that this Party has an appreciation for the importance of rail transportation in Canada.

To support that statement I would like to comment on a situation in terms of the Government of British Columbia under former Premier David Barrett between the years 1972 and 1975. In recognizing the needs for improved rail service in British Columbia, the New Democratic Party Government of the day responded to the real need for upgrading the service by constructing, through B.C. Rail, a rail car plant at Squamish, B.C.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, it is indicative of Tory, Liberal and Social Credit Parties that they do not want any kind of successful Crown corporation which might employ people and provide services. That Crown corporation set up one of the most modern rail construction companies in North America. It was producing a car and a half a day for the B.C. Rail services. It employed 300 people. There was no indication that the rail car orders were decreasing. Yet, when the Socred coalition formed the Government in 1975 one of its first acts was to close that rail plant and lay off 300 people. We now know the need for upgrading the carrying capacity of our rail system. That rail car plant should have been producing constantly from 1975 on, which would have provided a large economic stimulus to that area which is now somewhat depressed because of the forest industry concerns.

Not only did the New Democratic Government propose and construct that rail car plant, there also were proposals to open up the North. This vision of the North would have included a rail system stretching from Vancouver through northern British Columbia, through the Yukon and into Alaska. This would open the North for the mineral and forest industries, and, more importantly, it would bring Alaskan gas and oil from Alaska down through British Columbia and into the southern States. That was a vision which never saw fruition simply because, again, a Social Credit Government did not see the economic viability of that system.

The proposal of the New Democratic Party for rail upgrading would serve the purpose of this Bill. It would serve the purpose of creating 100,000 more jobs than the Government is suggesting this Bill will produce. It would save the Canadian taxpayers and the Canadian prairie farmers hundreds of millions of dollars. It would produce a rail system which would be able to carry increased grain exports, and the mineral, forest and potash requirements of this country for its own domestic use and for export.