

Western Grain Transportation Act

Mr. de Jong: One of them is supporting one section of this CP enterprise and the other supports the other section.

Mr. Taylor: More and more baloney.

Mr. de Jong: This Party has consistently taken the same position, over and over again. Let me explain it as simply as I can to both sides of the House.

We claim that the Canadian public throughout all these years has paid for a transportation system, the CP Rail. In 1982 dollars the public invested through various subsidies, grants, et cetera, close to \$13.5 billion in CP Rail. We insist that that rail system be used for transportation of grain, that we do not splinter that system. We insist that CP Rail start doing what it was paid to do, that is all. Is that so complicated? Is that an outrage against private enterprise? If it is, I think we are lost. This country is lost. It does not matter really whether it is the Liberals or the Tories who are in power, they will just continue handing out money; one to CP Rail and the other to CP trucks. The Canadian people and the taxpayer will continue to be losers.

Our Conservative friends charge that we are against "the free choice." If you start allowing massive trucking in western Canada you will end up with two systems of hauling grain, both inadequate. You will have a trucking system which depends on public subsidies for roads and the maintenance of those roads, and you will have a railway system which will start making the claim that there is not enough traffic moving along certain lines. This will accelerate branch line abandonment.

Mr. Shields: Big brother knows.

Mr. de Jong: You will end up with two inadequate systems. Our friends in the Conservative Party say this is dictatorial.

Mr. Shields: Big brother again.

Mr. de Jong: Hear the Member crow. It is "big brother", he says.

Mr. Epp: It is.

Mr. de Jong: It is "big brother" to ask the railroads to do what you pay them to do. He calls that being big brother.

Mr. Shields: You want the whole thing for the railroads.

Mr. de Jong: The logic escapes me.

Mr. Epp: You haven't studied it.

Mr. de Jong: I think it escaped those Members a long time ago. Can those Members not get it into their heads that if you start paying it all to the farmers you will fracture the railway system, fracture the transportation system?

Mr. Shields: Big brother knows best.

Mr. de Jong: Surely every study that has been done, as well as the recommendations of various provincial Governments,

including Conservative Governments, ask this Committee and ask this Parliament not to allow a system that will fracture our transportation system. Hon. Members on my right are so adamant about this, even though the largest producer organizations—

● (2130)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member, but his allotted time has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, while we address the entire question about the accountability of CPR to Canadian taxpayers, in face of the large amount of moneys that were transferred from the pockets of taxpayers to that corporation over the years, it is worth while to take a look at the history of the Crow rate, in particular.

In 1881 the CPR syndicate accepted from the people of Canada land, cash, rail lines and other benefits in exchange for a commitment to "thereafter and forever efficiently maintain, work and run the Canadian Pacific Railway". Clearly Parliament intended that the vast land grants and other benefits were to permit the syndicate to finance the railway's ongoing operation. In general terms, the Crow rate is one half of an indivisible national policy dating back to Sir John A. MacDonald to provide tariff protection for central industry and low cost transport to develop the eastern and western regions.

I have no doubt that the House will be interested in what another Member of my caucus will have to say about past Conservative policy on rail transportation. He managed to find, I believe in a used bookstore in Montreal, a 1882 policy document of the Conservative Party which had been used in an election campaign at that time. I am sure the House will be interested in the historical significance of what my colleague will have to say later in the debate.

Specifically, the Crow rate was agreed upon by CPR and the Government of Canada and remains a valid and binding contract. Sir Clifford Sifton, party to the negotiations that established the 1897 Crow rate agreement, said in 1929:

I remember when as a young minister in Laurier's cabinet, Van Horne and Shaughnessy said a line into the Kootenay mining district would not be considered for fifteen years. Also I remember that within six weeks the same two gentlemen came into my office and said that they had to build this line and wanted a large bonus for doing it, that the CPR was on the verge of bankruptcy.

He went on to say:

We gave them this bonus against the public sentiment of two-thirds of the people of Canada. They built the line and the Kootenay mining development—

Of course that was the nucleus of Cominco:

—saved the CPR and saved a good many other things in Canada.