

The rate was not related in any way to the number of miles travelled or to the nature of the terrain.

The excuse of confidentiality in the name of competition does not hold water. As it pertains to the railways, it has never held water. We can no longer let the railways use that excuse. It is another form of Blackmail. Officials of the railways say: "We will not give you the information unless it is confidential, and if it is not going to be confidential, we will not give it to you." Therefore, a member of a Government agency such as the Grain Transportation Administrator will be handcuffed when making decisions. The Senior Grain Transportation Committee will be handcuffed unless it agrees that the information is confidential and legislation will require that it be confidential.

The right of the public to have access to this information is involved here as well. There have been many contentious instances in the last number of years both here and in the United States regarding freedom of information, and when disclosure was finally forced, it really did not affect at all the competitive position of the companies concerned. That myth should be put to rest once and for all in this legislation, Mr. Speaker. Information should not only be not confidential but as well it should be mandatory that any information that the Grain Transportation Administrator or advisory committee want should be provided by the railways. It should be entirely up to the people receiving that information to decide whether any or all of it will be confidential. For that matter, the same provision should apply to the Canadian Transport Commission not only concerning railroads but other modes of transportation as well.

● (1710)

We believe that Motion No. 50 and Motion No. 53 meet the kind of criteria that are in place in many parts of the world for transportation not only of grain but many other commodities. It is in place among modes of transportation in many parts of the world as between different participants in each transportation mode as well as between the transportation modes themselves. Surely it is unnecessary to continue maintaining or adding legislation that perpetuates the past practices of confidentiality and the investing of surpluses from funds received from taxpayers. Surely it is time to put a halt to those practices which have been going on for the last 102 years.

The issue of confidentiality is no longer valid. It is no longer relevant to the duties that we place upon the agency established under this legislation. Similarly, it is long past due that surpluses which are made on money invested by the taxpayer should at least be re-invested in that plant. The two choices are to reinvest it or return to the taxpayers a dividend or interest on their money. I prefer the former option because we will need a minimum of \$2 billion or \$3 billion a year not just for the next decade but for the next 20 or 30 years in order to bring our transportation system, particularly the rail system, up to the level at which it should be.

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Mr. Speaker, usually it is a pleasure to speak to legislation, but in some ways

Western Grain Transportation Act

it is not a pleasure when one must deal with a Bill such as this and the amendments to it which are before us.

At the outset let me respond to the concern expressed by the Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) about being frivolous. Certainly any amendment taken by itself cannot be considered frivolous. Certainly it cannot be considered frivolous if one looks at the Speaker's ruling on it. If they were frivolous, they would not have been allowed.

I suggest that it is all relative because when one considers the number of motions that have been accepted, some of them are much more important than others. The Hon. Member for Regina West has been talking about information to the railroads and other matters instead of using our limited time in the House as a result of the disgraceful closure on this Bill to talk about some very substantive measures in this Bill, such as a method of payment, the freeze, the \$450 billion in the B.C. coal lands. If he believes that he is doing a good service to his constituents, the producers whom he represents, by talking about the information railways will be putting out, then I suggest that he is being frivolous in his actions in the House. That is precisely what the Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) was referring to.

Furthermore, of all the Members in that part of the House, the Hon. Member for Regina West should know that better than any one else because he was the only Member from the NDP on the committee during the summer. He is the one who should know what are the substantive issues in this Bill, and which measures are important and should be discussed here during the limited time available to us. His concern about being referred to as frivolous simply points out the nonsensical, frivolous, philosophical and ideological position that the NDP has taken throughout the debate.

Our Party has attempted, and in many ways succeeded, in improving a Bill that is very bad. It remains a poor Bill despite our best efforts to improve it. I do not take a lot of satisfaction in saying that the NDP, who represents areas on the Prairies from where I come, has not seen fit to take part in improving what we consider a bad Bill despite our efforts to improve it. The point is that when we should be discussing measures that are of substantial importance to the producers in the part of the country that I represent, the NDP is using the little time that is available to us to debate this Bill to talk about what are basically frivolous amendments when compared to the more substantial motions in this Bill. That is all I will say with respect to the NDP and the Member for Regina West.

I will not use the full ten minutes allotted to me because there is little time to debate this Bill. Since we need to get on with it, the NDP should let us do so and stop putting up a speaker on every motion. Surely Members of that Party do not need to have the whole caucus talk about information being available from the railway. Surely they could simply put up one or two speakers so that we could proceed to debating the important amendments in this Bill.

Let me talk briefly about Motion No. 52. It simply states that Bill C-155 be amended in Clause 29 by striking out lines 10 to 15. Those lines state: