

Western Grain Transportation Act

Transport Commission to examine these costs and present them to Parliament.

I have told the Minister and I have told the House that it will take six months to two years to do a proper examination of these costs because they are so complicated. The very fact that the media has never mentioned the Royal Commission report under MacPherson and has never mentioned the Royal Commission report under Hall is because Government has adopted the policy in this last three or four years, on transportation particularly but in other matters as well, of taking away from Parliament what Parliament should be doing.

In Parliament years ago we decided there was no chance of the Department of Transport solving this problem so we took the power away from it and put it into a large Canadian Transportation Commission, with all the bodies there to handle these questions. However, the Government has ignored the Canadian Transportation Commission on VIA Rail. It has ignored it on this vital Bill to our Constitution. Because whether we like it or not, Mr. Speaker, the Crow Bill is not a matter of dollars and cents; it is part of the cultural inheritance of western Canada. We drew immigrants to our area from Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic Provinces and the whole world, to fill up this land and to help keep it away from the aggressive land hunters of the United States. The whole fabric of our being was to build that railway close to the boundary in order to keep that land as our own. We have this land in common from Newfoundland right across to British Columbia and the Yukon.

It has been suggested that since we are going to take a year or so to handle it properly we should let the Government announce an interim policy, which it can do under the Act, and carry the development of the railroad system out in the West. That is the first thing. The second thing is that it must be realized that for 20 years now the so-called economic experts have argued to the grain companies, have argued to the railways, and have argued to business, that there is no future for the grain farmer in western Canada. Even as late as 1968 and 1969, an agricultural task force recommended that we get rid of two out of three farmers right across Canada and get rid of half the farm land in the Prairies. With that type of evidence from the so-called experts, you cannot blame the grain companies for not modernizing and you cannot blame the railways for letting their lines deteriorate.

I am simply saying that now the railways realize and now the people of Canada are beginning to realize that the great wealth of the future for this whole nation in the next 40 or 50 years will come primarily from the areas west of the Great Lakes. The tonnage of minerals, lumber, potash, coal and gravel will come from the west. The first thing the railways should do, if they want to make more money immediately, is to get their rates down for the mineral products, for the potash, the lumber, the gravel and the coal. They would then see how they would make more money.

• (1720)

Today the lumber in British Columbia goes south to the Great Northern Railway in the United States and is then hauled across the U.S. before it is brought into Canada because the railways are trying to keep traffic down. They charge rates so high that business is driven to the U.S. They fought against coal transportation, against every form of transportation where they would make money because that would take away their excuse for trying to get rid of railway operations in Canada.

I could go on and talk about the economics which apply to a fixed cost industry. Every time you double the load factor of a railway you increase the profit tremendously. Fixed costs do not change. I would like to suggest as an interim policy, Mr. Speaker, instead of plunging into something like this which will not work, that we let the local people on the Prairies take over all these lines the railways claim they are losing money on. That was a recommendation of the Hall Commission. The farmers and businessmen of western Canada will run those 2,000 miles of line to make money on them by the simple device of operating them as a railway. Let the grain elevator be built at Yorkton so we can clean our grain and ship it non-stop to Hudson Bay. Not only the grain, but coal and potash. The Hudson Bay Railway should be operated, as we have talked about for 60 years, ten or 12 months of the year, not for six weeks. Let the railways make money, and when they do so do not complain. When the banks make money, do not complain. The farmers will be making some money, too.

This is a bad Bill. It brings fear into the hearts of the farmers in Quebec. That is why the PQ and Liberals in Quebec have come together to support us in Saskatchewan. This Bill brings fear into the hearts of the unemployed workers of Ontario. They know what it means when we lose \$1 billion in the West and we cannot spend it in the East. They lose three times as much as we lose. Let us do justice to the commodity groups who have been discriminated against for these last 15 or 20 years, yes, but under the proper agency, the Department of Agriculture not through railway charges.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, if this Government had been straightforward it would have allowed a six-month hoist for this Bill so the Government could have time to get its act together. Let us help, let us co-operate. We did this from 1962 to 1967 when we put through the transportation Bill. Five years of co-operation from all parties because the Government got down on its knees and admitted it did not know what to do. We helped to put it through but it took time. Closure was not necessary. Closure, or any other trick, should not have been used in this House.

I personally wanted some settlement of this Crow issue on a fair and equitable basis, as the Act proclaims, but all we have is this scam started by the CPR. They conned the cattlemen, the commodity groups, the mining and forest industries. They were told they would benefit if the farmers paid a few dollars more. But now all those groups have had their throats cut from