

Western Grain Transportation Act

include interruptions, for good purposes, to deal with matters—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The matter has been settled. The Chair is not counting the 20-minute intervention against the eight hours. The Hon. Member is recognized for debate.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, basically I have two and possibly three matters that I wish to address in my comments this morning. The first question relates to a rather unusual telegram which was received in my office last week on the day that the Bill on the Crow rate was introduced in the House of Commons and we agreed to give it first reading in the House. The telegram urges me to support the Government's proposals. I believe that is worth underlining.

The telegram came to me from the President and Chief Executive Officer of a prominent lumber firm in British Columbia. It is not the telegram which concerns me but the manner in which it reached me. I do not know how many private sector companies in British Columbia or elsewhere have been extended the privilege of calling on the Prime Minister's office to act as their messenger. This particular firm seems to enjoy that privilege and I wonder how many other Canadians have that privilege. Would the Canadian Cattle-men's Association enjoy a privilege of having a telegram sent to the Prime Minister's office for distribution to all Members in the House of Commons? I doubt it, but this is what happened.

I am holding a telegram which bears the names of all the Members from British Columbia. It arrived on my desk via what is very clearly marked up in the corner "The Com Centre of the PCO—PMO", which is the Prime Minister's office and the Privy Council office. It was obviously sent there to be distributed to Members from British Columbia.

The text of the telegram makes it quite clear that those of us from British Columbia are being urged to follow the Government's plan to abolish the statutory Crow rate. I find it rather unusual that the Prime Minister's office should receive a telegram of this sort and distribute it not only on paper, which presumably is part of the stationery supply of the Prime Minister's office, but also in an envelope which states at the bottom "PCO", presumably the Privy Council office, "Room 616, Postal Station B", and delivered by a messenger from the Prime Minister's office.

I wonder if all private sector corporations in Canada enjoy this particular privilege. I would find it strange if they did. How can any private sector corporation expect the Prime Minister's office to receive, print and distribute their messages for them? Apparently they do not trust the private sector any more than they trust the post office or CN-CP Telecommunications. While I frequently receive telegrams from CN-CP Telecommunications, this is the first time to my knowledge that I have received a telegram of this sort through the courtesy of the Prime Minister's office.

I also wonder whether this particular private sector corporation enjoys the use of the facilities of the office of the Hon.

Senator from Vancouver in order to get their messages quickly and cheaply to Ottawa and distributed once here. How many British Columbia companies enjoy this special privilege? Do other private sector companies in other Provinces enjoy this privilege? Do Crown corporations enjoy it in order to cut down on overhead?

If this is a general service that is being offered by the Prime Minister's Office, I think I will suggest to my constituents in my next householder that all they have to do if they have an urgent message they wish to send me is to get in touch with the office of Senator Perrault from Vancouver, leave their message there and it will be communicated presumably by telex to the Prime Minister's office or the PCO and will reach me with very little cost to them. It seems to me to be somewhat of a lobby scam and I find it odd that any reputable organization should use this particular method to get its communications to a Member of Parliament.

My second comment relates specifically and exclusively to Section 62 of the Bill now before us. This particular sector authorizes "the Government of Canada" to do certain things with the lands it "selected" in British Columbia in 1897 with what are known as the Dominion coal lands.

I think it is worth drawing a number of aspects of this particular Bill to the attention of the House. I would like to read the text of that article into the record. It states:

62. Notwithstanding the Crow's Nest Pass Act and any agreement made pursuant thereto, the Government of Canada may hold, dispose of or otherwise deal with the lands it selected under paragraph 1(i.) of that Act in any manner and on any conditions it thinks fit.

These are rich coal lands in southeastern British Columbia in the Crow's Nest Pass area which got into the hands of the Crown in the right of the Dominion in a rather unusual way. These are the lands that are being spoken of which involve 50,000 acres, or about 80 square miles. It is an area of eight miles in one direction and 10 miles in another and contains easily accessible high-grade metallurgical grade coal said to amount to anywhere from one billion to 8.5 billion tonnes. The lands are a source of considerable wealth both to the firm granted the mining permit and the Government taxing the product. The lands border on properties already producing plentiful supplies of coal, Sparwood and Fernie, for shipment to Japan.

Those 80 square miles of British Columbia territory were retained by the Crown in right of Canada in 1930 when all other natural resources were returned, through the constitutional amendment covering natural resource transfers and other matters, to British Columbia and to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba as well. That 80 square miles of British Columbia land was specifically excluded from the 1930 amendment and was also retained by the Crown in right of the Dominion despite the terms of Section 92A of the BNA Act, now the Constitution Act of 1867, appearing as Part VI of the Constitution Act of 1981.

Section 92A deals specifically with non-renewable resources and in whose jurisdiction their governance and regulation lies.