true, I believe, of the model on which those who wish to change the Crow rate works.

According to the computers, if only we were rid of this anachronism called the Crow rate, we would have an efficient transportation system. Neglected in this corporate and computer model of society are the people who actually produce food because they prefer a rural way of life and because they have a sense of vocation. The banks and the railways do not feed people; farmers do.

Those who are not aware of the economic, political, social and cultural significance of the Crow rate might think that a fixed rate for grain transportation, especially one fixed in 1897, is as ludicrous as regulating the price of chocolate bars, would be. But Canada itself is an economic absurdity created by political interference in the continental marketplace where natural trade flows were north and south. It is this will to be a country separate and distinct from the United States of America that is at stake in this debate, in the battle against those who would change the Crow rate.

The decentralized political economy of prairie Canada has never fitted the market economic model. The Canadian Pacific Railway and the settlements which followed its construction were made possible by a national policy to subsidize transportation. Not anxious to see mineral traffic in southern B.C. siphoned off by American railways, the CPR agreed to the Crow rate as a condition of public subsidies to build the Crowsnest Pass line.

If the CPR wishes to renegotiate the deal, then we in the New Democratic Party say that surely as a matter of corporate morality the whole deal should be put back on the table and not just the part that the CPR does not like anymore. Let us put everything back on the table.

• (1650)

The Crow rate opened up the grain economy and prevented non-agrarian capital from exploiting the prairie region. By preventing variable freight rates, the Crow rate made inland grain terminals uneconomic. But the international grain companies are anxious to move in once the barrier has been removed, and no doubt it is their advice—and in at least on of those companies we find a former Liberal Cabinet Minister—that the federal Government is heeding. Variable freight rates will change more than the elevator system.

Ending the Crow will centralize and stratify prairie society, making farmers and workers less aware of each other's contribution to the community. Today the elevator agent knows farmers and their problems and is a respected member of the community. Division of labour in inland grain companies will isolate workers from farmers and relegate many of them to repetitive, mundane tasks, alienating them from this new industrial process. For the farmer, delivering grain will mean long truck hauls and waiting in line-ups. As farm incomes are reduced, ownership of land will be concentrated into fewer and corporate hands. Those farmers who cannot afford to expand will have to quit farming or work off the farm, which will reduce the number of farm families to support the community businesses and services. Therefore, the quality of life in small towns will decline and the social infrastructure, made redundant, will have to be replaced at high costs in cities to which the landless will have to move.

The Government says it must risk this social disaster in order to provide the railways with a higher return on investment. The argument is that the railways will increase the production of transportation service if they are paid more per ton of grain they haul. The same people appear to believe, Mr. Speaker, that the way to motivate the farmers to produce more is to pay them less. Farmers, to their credit, are expected to have some sense of vocational responsibility. They are expected to keep on farming even if they are making less and less money all the time. On the other hand, no one expects that of the railways because they have long since abandoned any sense of responsibility or vocation. Even the CNR has changed its advertising. It is now just "In business for Canada", and is no longer a responsibility as well as a business.

The Crow debate is fundamentally a conflict between two economic cycles. The Crow rate protects farm income from high transport costs, funnelling farm spending through local businesses linked to the wider economy via the incomes of workers making trucks, tractors and other farm supplies. Ending the Crow rate short-circuits this decentralized economic path and siphons farmers' money into railway corporations, much of which will flow out as dividends and investment in real estate, coal-related expansion, and other things not having to do with transportation of grain.

Anyone who believes that it is strictly for the sake of better grain hauling that the Crow rate is to be changed is kidding himself, his fellow Canadians, railway workers and farmers. If the Crow is ended, the drop in farm income will be much more than the extra billions of dollars farmers will pay to the railways over the years. Without the Crow rate, the price pooling and quota systems of the Wheat Board will collapse as multinational operations eventually take everything over. As a result, the value of grain sold will not go to the person who produces it, but to private grain companies which will buy grain at low prices and resell it at high prices.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when railway rates and seaway tolls are increased in Canada, as the Government plans, foreign grain companies will find it much less expensive to divert grain to Minneapolis where it can be located on barges for low cost transport to New Orleans. The multinationals will own the inland terminals on the Prairies, own or control the rail hopper cars, and the export elevator in New Orleans. Probably the same company will own the fertilizer company, and if the Government gets its way it will own the seeds, the patent on the seeds, and gone will be the Canadian control of the grain economy and gone will be thousands of railway and grain handling jobs in Canada.

By now we must all be asking ourselves, those of us who think anyway, why the federal Government is trying to change the Crow. Of course, money is an issue, and the Government hopes its formula will transfer to farmers the cost of hauling grain. We cannot ignore the power of large corporations,