issue will be reviewed in 1985-1986, it will give the Minister and those who are monitoring it some practical experience concerning how either method would work. I think there are some merits to this. I have not defined the principle in detail and I am sure there will be arguments, both pro and con. I am really throwing out a principle here that I believe will serve to ameliorate the objections of the commodity groups and the livestock producers and at the same time reduce regional tensions.

I know the Pools have strongly advocated payment directly to the railroads. If that is so, then the producer will have that right. We will see what the producers say. If the Pools are right in their contention, then most producers will naturally choose to have the payment directed to the railroad. We believe that is a solution. We would like the Minister to look at it and give us his comments. If it has some merit, we will certainly consider proposing it as an amendment.

I repeat that I think the principle has validity. It gives the producer some freedom of choice and we would be very pleased to work this matter out.

I have a fifth and final point. We believe that grain producers must have a statutory freight rate which preserves the benefits of the Crow and must be protected from open-ended escalation. This is not apparent in this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

The concerns we have with this Bill are numerous. We believe, notwithstanding the Minister's efforts, that this legislation is untimely. Just let me summarize. We will be opposing this Bill for the following reasons. First, we do not believe the principles of the statutory freight rate are being retained in this legislation.

Second, we believe the freight rate structure will provide for open-ended escalation without any consideration for farmers' profit positions or the value of grain. The Minister has stated his good intentions to bring in a safety net, but heretofore that has not been evident.

Mr. Pepin: I committed myself to the safety net.

Mr. Mazankowski: Third, we are opposed to the Bill on the basis that there is an upper limit of 31.1 million tonnes.

Fourth, we are opposed to this Bill because it excludes new crops and speciality crops. Again the Minister suggested changes, but we have not had that matter enunciated, and until we see that, it still remains one of our objections.

Fifth, we are opposed to this Bill because it is a costly bureaucratic mechanism.

Sixth, we are opposed to this Bill because it is inappropriate to impose further costs on the agricultural community at a time when farm commodity prices are declining and farm input costs are increasing.

Seventh, we have serious doubts about the monetary mechanism under service guarantees. Perhaps the experts could explain what is meant by some of these provisions in the Bill because we have not been able to read through the myriad of words, clichés and rhetoric. Maybe it is sufficient, but we have some doubts about that.

Eighth, we are opposed to this Bill because it will further militate against diversification and the further processing of agricultural production in western Canada.

Ninth, we are opposed to this Bill because there is no clear consensus in western Canada about how we should proceed.

As the Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions, he would not proceed unless there was a clear consensus. On February 13, 1981 the Prime Minister said:

> At the present time our policy is not to touch the Crow rate, but if there is a general feeling in the west, that the question must be reopened, then we would be happy to do so.

I say to the Minister there is not a consensus. Further, there was nothing mentioned in the last election campaign about dismantling the Crow. There was nothing mentioned in the Speech from the Throne about dismantling the Crow. Unitl there is that sort of clear consensus to move, I would suggest the Minister consider a postponement.

Tenth, we oppose this Bill because we believe this package is far too generous to the railroads.

Eleventh, we oppose this Bill because there is no provision that we can see in the Bill to reduce rates if costs should fall. That is what happened in energy. Look at the embarrassment in which we find ourselves now. A $70 per barrel price for oil was projected and everything was geared toward the increase, but there was never anything geared toward a reduction in the price. Perhaps the Minister might want to consider that scenario.

Twelfth, we are opposed to this Bill because of blended freight rates and the prospect of variable rates.

Thirteenth, we are concerned about the concentration of power in the hands of the Minister, this Minister or any subsequent Minister. We do not think the Minister should become a transportation czar.

Fourteenth, we are concerned about the potential erosion of power with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board.

In summary, those are the issues about which we are deeply concerned; other speakers will be elaborating on these and other points. But I must say that producers in western Canada view this process with suspicion, mistrust and anxiety. For them to give up something which they have had enshrined in statute for the regurgitated rhetoric that we see in this legislation is certainly not palatable, Mr. Speaker. I repeat, there is no consensus out there. This Government is not having to fulfil a promise it made during the election campaign or in the Speech from the Throne. I say that the Minister should seriously consider not moving ahead with this Bill until there are substantive changes to it which will meet the objectives that I have outlined and which others will be outlining in due course.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, I want to commence my speech on what I consider to be a black day for Canada and a black day for western producers by saying that