

Western Grain Transportation Act

session. It has become the rule, not the exception. The government treats this Bill as if it were a routine piece of legislation. It brings this Bill forth knowing full well that it needs revision.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), while in the West, admitted its imperfections but said that because there were no representatives from the West in his Government it would have to do. Well, it will not do. It is not routine legislation. It is almost as important as the Constitution, a Constitution without property rights or language protection for the majority, I might add.

Now we have a national transportation policy change, a change that can only be passed by this House, thank heaven. This is a Bill so incomplete that it does not address the impact on western grain producers, meat packers and the livestock feeding industry, let alone the impact on my Province and the Maritimes.

Where is the cost analysis of this impact that will be felt coast to coast? Because that is what Canada is all about. It is a small market of less than 25 million souls spread some 4,000 miles and held together by a band of steel known as the railroad. It was built by a population at the time of less than 3.5 million dedicated people, people deeply in debt, and against all odds. Now we want to destroy that system as it refers to all Canadians.

Today, as then, they must have fair freight rates in the West, subsidized freight rates. What is wrong with that? We subsidize our roads, our canals, our highways, our sidewalks and our airports. Let us take a good hard look at Mirabel which loses \$1 million a week, Mr. Speaker. Are we going to turn that money around and give it to the railroads? Why not our hard working and tax-paying farmers? Fairness can only come about with total hearings in committee by committee witnesses, such as was done with the Gilson hearings. We need real experts, not a bevy of ministerial bureaucrats. We need real debate in this House.

● (1150)

To show just how ludicrous is the handling of this Bill by the Minister, before he even tabled it announced unseen modifications. They were an agreement regarding linkage of grain-moving costs to international costs and the inclusion of specialty crops under the Crow rate. Lo and behold, these specific details were not made to Parliament but to the Press Club across the road. They are nowhere to be found in the legislation.

Nowhere in the Throne Speech or in the last election was change to the Crow rate even mentioned. One must wonder if this legislation in its present emasculated form, or anything vaguely resembling it, would be before us if the Government had even one Member west of Winnipeg.

This Bill, by estimation, will cost grain producers 10 per cent of their gross at a time when many are fighting for survival. It will cost livestock producers \$20 a tonne to offset grain producers. The out-of-whack rates in oilseeds and grain

as opposed to processed products should be removed. All farmers must be sure they have an efficient, inexpensive grain transportation system.

This Government and the railways are a fact of life, and in view of the actions of the United States, Argentina and other countries which subsidize grain exports, we must provide a low, competitive freight rate. Of course, the railways should receive proper compensation to be able to provide proper equipment and maintenance to move all Canadian commodities to market. This Bill is too generous to the railways which, by 1990, will receive a 1,000 per cent increase; and it does not address properly the other problems just stated.

Mr. Minister, Canadians need more input before their national transportation system is vandalized as the national energy system of this country was vandalized. Mr. Minister, why don't you go back to the drawing board.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. The Hon. Member is an experienced Parliamentarian. I have admonished him previously to address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Stewart: I apologize, Mr. Speaker, and I conclude—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): I should inform the Hon. Member that his time has expired.

Hon. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, I rise to join in this debate as the Member of Parliament for my riding of Vancouver South, as a western Member of Parliament and Member of Parliament from the Province of British Columbia. What I want to say today through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister comes not just as a consequence of my own views on this Bill, which will become clear as I continue, but I want to speak on behalf of fair-minded British Columbians who are concerned with all of our country.

I want to say on behalf of British Columbians who have a great stake in an improved rail system that when they start to realize the deficiencies and defects of this Bill, they will be as opposed to the provisions that have been presented to this Parliament as are the people in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. I go even further and say that as British Columbians begin to realize what is wrong with this Bill and as citizens in other parts of the country than the prairie Provinces begin to realize what is wrong with it, they are going to say to the Minister on the floor of this House, through their elected representatives, "back up a bit and take some time to think it through".

We have been told that there can be no improvement to the rail system unless this Bill is passed by the end of June. That is the position of the Government and the Government propagandists. That position is being repeated in various places in this country to try to gain support for this Government to justify the closure that it nearly brought in and may still bring in, despite the fact that this Bill goes to the heart of what this country is all about. This is one of the most important provisions to come before this House of Commons since I came here in 1972. It affects dramatically and effectively three Provinces