

using the trucking system to carry grain to the railhead or port is ridiculous. I am very pleased to say that our Party is opposed to that and I am in full agreement with it.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on Motion No. 34, which attempts to negate a Conservative and Liberal amendment concerning the use of trucking to haul grain, we think this should be done because the amendment does not specify that such trucking arrangements should take place only where the CTC has approved an abandonment. It would allow trucking to be used by the railway or elevator companies to drain off business from existing branch lines in an effort to set up a line for abandonment. It would drain away business from the line to the point where they could then apply to have the whole thing abandoned.

We are opposed not because we are opposed to the use of trucks. They are vital to every bushel of grain moved off the Prairies. It is an integrated system where trucks take grain from the combines and the farms to the elevator for loading on to rail cars. That is not at issue, although I will go into it a little later in my remarks. What is at issue is the economic fact that once you allow trucking from existing branch lines on an ad hoc basis at the initiative of a trucking or elevator company, you are setting yourself up for complete domination by both railway companies. They do not involve themselves in trucking except in areas where they get a firm high volume business. That is what we are doing with this kind of amendment. Previous speakers from my Party have pointed out that CPR has already taken over some of the largest private trucking firms in Saskatchewan in anticipation of this kind of amendment being part of the Bill. It does not give us a competitive situation; it leaves us more in the hands of the railway corporate decision-making than is the case now with a proliferation of small trucking firms.

I cannot let go unchallenged some of the remarks made in the House today, Mr. Speaker, particularly by some Conservative Members who indicated they thought the NDP was not supportive of the trucking industry or small business. I think the Hon. Member for Kindersley-Lloydminster (Mr. McKnight) pointed out the basic problem. He said they had started from a different space than the NDP. Indeed they have. He went on to say they find some good in this Bill. We find very little good in this Bill. He says their job is to amend it, to make it an even better Bill. We say the Bill is so bad there is not much we can do except stop the Bill. We will use whatever legitimate legislative means we have to slow the process and give the public an opportunity to put pressure on the Conservative and Liberal Parties to see the error of their ways.

I think the fact that the main points of the argument for having these proposed changes, which were put forward by the Government in the form of major amendments to the Bill, were all ruled out of order indicates we should be going back to square one and starting with a new Bill based on some of the information we heard from farmers and businessmen, the residents of rural areas on the Prairies where the committee

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travelled in order to find out what they thought of this Bill. We had a very good back-to-back presentation given on the effects of railways and trucks on these communities presented to us by the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). If I may paraphrase Peter Ustinov, they found themselves of two minds on the issue, one more or less in disagreement with the other.

The Hon. Member for Saskatoon West cited a town in his riding which had its rail line abandoned. He made it very clear that a grain town like that almost does not exist without a rail line. He pointed out that the village had now applied to be disbanded because there are no railway tracks and no more function for the village. The Hon. Member for Provencher pointed out, perhaps rightly, that you do not need a railway to have a town. He cited the fact that the town where he was born never had a railway and still exists. I think he went on to reach some conclusions based on that, and he went beyond that to reach the point where I was almost convinced by the argument of the Hon. Member for Provencher that if people wanted to fish hard enough, they could set up a fishing village on top of a mountain and somehow it would succeed. That kind of faith, I think, is the other side of the argument that we have been hearing from Hon. Members beside us.

● (1750)

With regard to trucks as an alternative to rail service, I do not think anyone, even my hon. friends to my right, seriously feels that it would be a true alternative to rail service. Although they did not make it very clear, I am sure they are not foolish enough to think that trucks could transport our export grain. Anyone who thinks that this is possible should just stop for a moment to think of the massive movement that would be required. It takes three or four large trucking rigs to fill one hopper car. There are 110 hopper cars per trainload, which means that it would be necessary to have 350 to 450 trucks moving from somewhere on the Prairies out to port in British Columbia or Thunder Bay just to move the equivalent of one trainload. I do not think anyone should really be arguing that trucks will provide serious competition for the railways, but I heard Hon. Members attempting to make that argument.

The Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell), who just spoke, pointed out the great benefits of using trucks to move grain over rail. He said it had so many advantages and created so many more jobs as, indeed, it probably would. He said that the equipment wears out far faster so that one is always employing people, rebuilding the trucks and the trailers they are using, and is that not fine? Perhaps it is, except that we must be able to move the grain at a price that will put it in competition in world markets. Spending that kind of money will not do it. The Hon. Member for Ontario probably could have gone even further with his argument, if he was only going to take an employment argument, and pointed out all the advantages that could be gained by packstacking it to the coast. It would have produced far more jobs making shoes and