

S.O. 21

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark (Brandon-Souris): Second, the prairie farmer must be guaranteed that his transportation costs never exceed the long term average. During the last quarter century prairie wheat farmers have paid transportation costs which averaged approximately 7 per cent of the initial price, and any safety net which is to be established must never exceed that percentage.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform all the Members of this House, through you, that western Canadian farmers are very disappointed in the Government's agricultural policies. The proof for that statement lies in the fact that those policies were supported by only 17 per cent of the electorate in the recent by-election in Brandon-Souris.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AMENDMENT

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Madam Speaker, the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) have stated in the House a number of times that they wanted consensus in the West on changes to the Crow rate policy. The freedom of choice amendment recommended by the Progressive Conservative Party and the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) in this House is an acceptable framework for agreement.

This amendment has received wide acclaim in western Canada, and at public meetings the vast majority of a cross-section of farmers, almost unanimously, supported the concept. This is understandable, as the freedom of choice option goes right back to basic democratic principles; the people who have to live with the program decide what the program will be. Real democracy! Producers themselves will decide whether their share of the Crow shortfall will go to the railways or to the producers. The producers choosing to take the shortfall themselves will then decide to use the railway or the trucks, or feed their grain to livestock. This freedom of choice will hurt no one but will be a unifying force in Canada. The program will provide the instrument which will permit all industries in the West to reach their real potential, and it will hurt no one in any part of Canada.

I urge the Government to accept this amendment. It will do much to unite Canada. The freedom of choice concept will guarantee the consensus which the Prime Minister and the Minister of Transport said they were seeking.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[*English*]

LABOUR RELATIONS

WEST COAST GRAIN HANDLERS' DISPUTE

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Transport relating to the problem of the West Coast grain handling dispute. As the Minister will know, grain exports account for billions of dollars and are very important not only to western Canada but to the whole economy as well. I understand that there has been no negotiation between either labour or management since June 1. I wonder if the Minister can give us an update regarding this very critical situation on the West Coast.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I might reply on behalf of the Minister of Labour who is still overseas, but who, we all hope, will be back very soon. The situation in relation to the West Coast problem is still that the two Parties must make a decision that they want to arrive at a settlement. We have responded to their telegram, suggesting to them that any attempt to introduce mediation or conciliation must first be preceded by a clear example that they themselves are willing to come to the table and get down to bargaining so that an arrangement or decision can be made in that kind of spirit. There is no point in intervening someone in that particular situation until both parties clearly demonstrate their own willingness to arrive at an agreement.

REQUEST THAT NEGOTIATIONS BE UNDERTAKEN

Mr. Charles Mayer (Portage-Marquette): Madam Speaker, I would point out to the same Minister that the Government has a responsibility in that, in 1974, through the Neil Perry Report it gave parity with longshoremen to the grain workers. As of last year, 1982, there has been a conflict because the Government imposed a six and five package on grain handling companies. Therefore the Government has a responsibility in this situation because there is a conflict of Government policies which both parties are trying to work out. Would the Minister reconsider his position so that the Government would become involved, either by appointing a commission or a board to become directly involved, to ensure that some face to face negotiations take place again between labour and management?

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Madam Speaker, I think we in this House are all deeply concerned that an agreement be reached. No one, in any way, wants to witness the kind of blockage of transportation of our grain which has happened in the past. However, I must say that absolutely no good is being served by members of the Opposition standing up in the House trying to negotiate a settlement across the floor of the House of Commons. The negotiation must take place between the parties to the dispute. That is what collective bargaining is all about.