

Canadian National Railways—Acquisition of Cast shipping group—Government approval. (b) Possibility of freight rate war on Atlantic shipping routes; The Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain)—Forestry—Request for extension of committee's terms of reference. (b) Request for early referral to committee; The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow)—National Revenue—Seizure of children's theatre company funds. (b) Effect on performing arts groups.

Mr. Forrestall: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that this morning the Standing Committee on Transport met in camera with the President of the Canadian National Railways, and we had an exposition of the matter lasting a good three and one half hours, and because of the uncertainty as to what might happen even later today or the next day or so, it might be appropriate for me to ask to be excused or to withdraw from this position on the Late Show.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement that the Hon. Member for Dartmouth-Halifax East shall withdraw the item which has been submitted for the adjournment debate?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Agreed and so ordered.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Pepin that Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is customary in the House that the Speaker asks if there is unanimous consent for an Hon. Member to continue his remarks. I think that the Hon. Member was just completing his remarks at a very important point he was making, and I think that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member had exceeded his time. He had been given ample warning by the Chair. The Hon. Member had noted the Chair's warning and had continued his remarks. With all due respect to the Hon. Member, if he had observed the courtesy to the Chair, the Chair would have extended the same courtesy to him.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague says, it is not a pleasure nor a particular privilege but, rather, a solemn duty once again to participate in the debate which centers around the so-called Crow controversy. There is hardly anything in my experience in Parliament, which is now that of close to 11 years, which has so

aroused the sensitivities and emotions of so many Canadians and, indeed, on both sides of the issue.

The Liberal Government has done its homework on this particular issue. It has called in its so-called IOUs. It has sensitized the emotions and the attention of the lumber industry in western Canada, for instance, and the mining sector, telling them that unless they support the Government on these changes to the Crow, it will not be able to live up to the commitments that it has made in terms of the upgrading of our transportation infrastructure in western Canada. Indeed, the message was even more subtle. They are being told that if they do not get out of their closet and support the Government publicly on these matters, there may no longer be any co-operation from the federal Government in terms of grants and all of the other benefits which industry, particularly large industry, has become so accustomed to and comfortable with over the last decade.

Transportation in a country like ours, particularly rail transport, is a key element in determining our socioeconomic condition and the well being of our country. It is a very important element in bringing about an industrial strategy. I can understand the legitimate and serious concerns of other sectors of the economy, such as the wood converting industries and the mining industry because they, more than anyone else, have suffered very dramatically from a lack of productivity which has rendered our industrial strength in world markets rather vulnerable. It is not the fact that our workers are producing less but that we have paid too little attention to modernizing our plants and transportation infrastructure to get our products to market. We have lived through a period of deliberate neglect in these important areas. We have heard all kinds of promises and commitments of billions of dollars toward the upgrading of our rail transportation facilities in the West, but of course nothing has happened.

• (1720)

As I have said, transportation is and always will be the key element in any industrial strategy, particularly in a country which has a rich geography and where some of the key industrial areas are so far removed from the market.

It means more than that to farmers in the agricultural sectors. Rail subsidies that were designed to help farmers maintain a stable farm economy in our area have an important social content to them. Indeed, the rail subsidies that were placed to help western farmers are designed to meet some of these important social objectives both domestically and internationally. These reflect our official public policy to maintain a cheap food price policy. That is the important social component for which the Crow rate was in place and for which some of these rail subsidies have been made, besides providing an incentive for farmers to go west to begin to develop the Prairies.

If farmers were permitted to charge prices for what they produce that were comparable with other industrial commodities such as lumber and minerals that we sell abroad, food