

Western Grain Transportation Act

Because the writ of habeas corpus dates back to 1679, that does not mean that anyone wanting to support the position should be considered reactionary. We have medicare in this country. Because we in the New Democratic Party support it, that does not mean that we should be viewed as being reactionary but, rather, as taking a positive and realistic approach.

I want to point out some of the negative implications that this proposal will have on farmers in the West, especially those in certain regions of the country where the impact might be disproportionate to others. In some ways it is curious that the Ministers who have spoken have seemed to propose a new vision for the West. This is in contrast to the vision of people at the beginning of the twentieth century for populating and developing the West. The Pepin proposal will work in reverse to the vision at the beginning of the twentieth century in that rather than having prosperity and population growth in the West we will have depopulation and decay.

I say that because I want to address this from the perspective of some of the farmers who will be affected by this Bill. I want to take the perspective of residents of my constituency. As I have mentioned several times in the House, farmers in the West are being dealt a double whammy. There are rail line abandonment policies proceeding at full tilt and there is the Pepin proposal which will take money out of the pockets of the farmers.

I want to give some concrete examples of this. There has been a series of rail line abandonment hearings in my area and certain decisions have been made by the CTC with regard to the closing of the Winnipegosis subdivision and consequently the closing of the elevator at Fork River.

What will this mean to the farmers in the area? With the loss of the elevator at Fork River many producers of the region will face the prospect of transporting their grain 160 kilometres to 200 kilometres. This means that if a farmer has to truck his grain that extra distance he may only be able to make one trip per day, and it is likely he will have to contend with line-ups at the elevator. He will be in competition with the farmer who has a local elevator and only has to transport his grain 15 kilometres or 20 kilometres.

Someone like the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) might argue that such producers should work farms in other areas. I would point out to him that the rail line went through this particular region some 85 years ago and at that time everyone had every reason to assume that there would be, in perpetuity, some way for the farmer to transport his grain.

Let me turn now to the cost element. In my area some farmers tell me that it costs them \$2.50 per bushel to produce barley. When they add 25 cents per bushel to the cost of hauling the grain beyond Fork River, for example, there will be no profit for them.

In addition, when they lose the local elevators they are losing regional experts. These people live in the area and can inform the farmer about the local weed control situation, about pesticides suitable for the local soil and so on. All this expertise will be lost. In addition, the local grain elevators serve as depots for fertilizers, sprays and seed grain. This is part one of

the double whammy that the Minister of Transport is allowing to occur on the Prairies.

Let us consider now the increased base cost of the Pepin proposal. If, for example, a farmer in the Waterhen or Rorke-ton area has to transport his grain beyond Fork River, that means that such things as a telephone call will be more costly because he will have to use a different exchange. There is also more wear and tear on the farmer's truck. We have the huge increase in fuel prices which farmers have to contend with. And there is the spiralling interest costs which have posed a great problem for the farmers in my area. In addition, they have had huge increases in the cost of fertilizer and other costs.

● (1250)

Let me give an example of what this will mean with respect to income. We have heard grandiose representations this morning by one of the Ministers about the fantastic growth potential, savings and all the added income which would be garnered on the Prairies as a result of this Pepin initiative. I point out that in many regions of Canada the average income, especially in constituencies such as mine, is considerably lower than other parts of Canada. Revenue Canada statistics for 1978—I am sorry but these are the latest I have—indicate that the average income for the Fork River region was \$5,706 for the year. If we were to compare this with the rest of Canada, the national average of net income for that particular year was \$10,313. Their income is about half what it is in the national arena.

Even if you project the proportionate increase for 1983, you would find that the \$2,800 which the Hon. Member for Lambton-Middlesex (Mr. Ferguson) spoke of as being peanuts would have a fantastic impact on farmers in my area. And it is not just this area; I could give illustrations of other parts of Manitoba and draw comparisons there.

The reason I am pointing this out to the Hon. Minister, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister, on many occasions in this House, has said he cannot understand why Hon. Members from different parts of the West are saying different things. I would just like to indicate to him why it is that some Hon. Members might be saying different things. I would like the Hon. Minister to have, perhaps, an iota more of discernment so he would be able to recognize the perspective which Members are bringing to this debate. Up to this point he has not indicated, to me at least, that he has had the ability to listen and learn in terms of the different perspectives of various Hon. Members.

I will give an illustration of the average income in Manitoba so the Minister will understand why, for example, the Hon. Member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) might bring forward a different point of view in his perspective. In 1978 in the Brandon Manitoba area, the average income was \$9,060. In Portage la Prairie Manitoba the average income for that year was \$9,044. In Stonewall Manitoba, which is very near Winnipeg, the average income was \$9,209.