

Western Grain Transportation Act

● (2020)

I am sorry to say that I asked the Canadian Transport Commission to supply me with some estimates. Mr. Speaker, if you are about to cut me off, might I ask for unanimous consent to continue very briefly?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Is there unanimous consent for the Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte (Mr. McCain) to continue his remarks?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. McCain: I asked the CTC to supply me with estimates of the cost of the transportation of goods on flat cars. They are the simplest and cheapest kind of vehicle moved on the railroads. I asked what would be the costs on a tonne-mile basis to move a flat car containing 5, 10, 20, 25, 50 or 100 tonne loads. I was promised personally by the Chairman that I would get the Commission's estimate of these costs. That was about five years ago, and I do not have those estimates to this date. I also addressed the fact that the railroads were having difficulty dispatching their cars. Why could they do it better 25 years ago with a pencil, a pad and a telegraph key than they now can with computers? That has not been addressed.

I expected that the Government would address the multimodal problem, and asked whether it could in fact introduce efficiency into the transportation system. We watched in the City of Saint John while the bus company built its terminal downtown, and VIA Rail built its station about three miles away in the outskirts of the city. This could not work on a multimodal basis; but it was going to work for VIA Rail. That was the procedure; Government assistance to build a bus terminal in downtown Saint John and all Government money to build a VIA Rail station some three or four miles away in the outskirts of city. That is the way the Government has addressed transportation problems.

I have watched, as a Member of the House, as the Government said that the MFRA was the greatest thing since sliced bread for Atlantic Canada, but it has cut down its effectiveness. I watched while the Government introduced an intrasubsidy into the transportation structure of Atlantic Canada to assist transportation, industry, agriculture and farmers and fishermen, and that has been withdrawn. The Provinces were told under pressure, "We will give you X number of bucks to do some infrastructure but we will cut your subsidies anyway". That is the way it was addressed.

I challenge Hon. Members of the New Democratic Party to recognize that there are in fact transportation problems in Canada, that the Crow rate is in fact one of them, and that the area of Atlantic Canada which did not send a single NDP Member to this place would like to hear them attack the Government and be protagonists for transportation in Atlantic Canada. That is what we from Atlantic Canada would like to see from the NDP. There has not been a relative word uttered by the last three speakers from the NDP, not a relative word.

We must recognize that the country needs some adjustment to the total transportation package. We can look at greater efficiency of the movement of products in this nation. We need unit trains in some parts of the West to move coal and move grain. Why do we not look at that bay up there in the North of Canada? Why do we not estimate how much we could save if we spent a little money developing that? Why do we not address the problem and get this Bill into a form of which the Minister will say—

Mr. Smith: That is right.

Mr. McCain: Just wait until I have finished; do not interrupt. If you develop your manners, you might be wiser and not get caught out on a limb. Why do we not address the problem?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. This side of the House had the manners to extend the time of the Hon. Member by giving him unanimous consent to continue.

Mr. McCain: So you could be rude?

Mr. Smith: I do not think we deserve a cheap shot like that. If he repeats it, it will be the last time he gets such an extension.

Some Hon. Members: That is not a point of order.

Mr. McCain: Mr. Speaker, I would recommend a good night's sleep for that gentleman in order to remove a little of the edge of his temper.

Let us address the transportation problem. Yes, unit trains have a place, but are they the only vehicle by which we should transport grain? Tank cars have a place. Is there not also a place for a multi-use car which might bring something back from the ports of Atlantic Canada or from the ports of the Pacific?

Mr. Huntington: Or a pipeline.

Mr. McCain: Or even a pipeline. Why do we not adopt a reasonable position in which the Minister will acknowledge and allow reasonable amendments to the Bill? He could state what those reasonable amendments would be such that we would know the ground on which we walk. Then we would know where we were at. If he knows that amendments should be made, let us at least get the principle of them. Will there be an opportunity for freedom of choice in the West or not? Let us address Canada's transportation problems as we are addressing this single problem.

I thank Hon. Members in the House, including the Hon. Member who raised the point of order, for providing me with an opportunity to conclude my remarks.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a very brief point of order. Might I be permitted to ask the Minister a very short question?

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Deans: No?

Mr. Pinard: A long question.