

Transportation

I turn now to the New Democratic Party. The federal NDP say they want to retain the status quo, yet they want the Hall recommendations implemented. They cannot have it both ways. If the Hall recommendations are implemented, that is not the status quo. That is quite a change. The NDP should not argue that. They should be saying they are in favour of change. They offer as a panacea to improving the system the proposal to nationalize the CPR. They seem to be more interested in pursuing a philosophical objective than in improving the grain transportation system. Quite frankly, it would cost billions of dollars to do that and it would not move one additional bushel of grain.

The minister of transport of Saskatchewan says as well that he wants no change, but he is advocating change by recommending that we follow the Hall recommendations. He, too, wants to buy a railroad. He has a heritage trust fund in Saskatchewan that he is going to tap. He wants to buy the CPR. The minister there wants to spend the taxpayers' dollars in Saskatchewan in a way which will not improve the transportation system one iota. He is offering a Crow rate guarantee plan. Here again he is prepared to tax the people of Saskatchewan to fund a major portion of the freight bill to move processed products.

Mr. Shields: No damn principles.

• (1240)

Mr. Mazankowski: Then I come to the Premier of Saskatchewan. Well, he favours a statutory rate but not necessarily the Crow. He says he is prepared to negotiate future cost increases as long as the producers keep the benefit of the Crow. But then he signed a document just the other day which says he is not prepared to accept any changes. Mr. Speaker, how can the New Democratic Party be taken seriously when they say they are going to fight, but when the crunch comes they become merely an appendage to the Liberal government in office?

Mr. Shields: Always have been, always will be.

Mr. Mazankowski: When the chips are down they fall in line and bolster the hopes of the Liberal Party, a party which occupies the seat of a Treasury Board which is bankrupting this country. I say shame on them.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that if this country is in a mess today, the New Democratic Party of Canada must share the blame. I say to you as well that if the farmers of Canada lose their statutory rights, they must blame the NDP as well as the Liberals because the NDP put this government in office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I have to take a moment to compose myself. I have been sort of snickering as I listened to the last speaker outline his perception of my party's position on the Crow. I would point out to the House and to the country, Mr. Speaker, that our party has been consistent this year, last year, during the most recent

election and in previous elections with regard to the Crow rate issue. I would point out that the hon. member's party still has members taking a different stand from the one he outlined. They are actively pursuing a program of doing away with the Crow, and they are unabashed critics of the Crow.

Before commencing my formal remarks I would just like to make a short comment about the allegation concerning the cost of nationalizing the CPR. If the hon. member was honest and looked at the amount of public money which has already been put into the CPR, and if he translated that into present day values and considered the time they have had the use of those assets, the difference between that and the current book or market value—whichever you want—of the CPR is less than \$1 billion. Two or three years of the Crow subsidy would purchase the CPR and we could put the railway system on a national basis and operate it as a part of this country's national policy once more.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pepin: It could hardly pay for the operating costs.

Mr. Althouse: I am going to talk about the economics of the Crow rate but I want to put it in context by explaining to some extent the background. I think the reasons given for changing the Crow have essentially been described by the government and by those members of the Conservative Party who advocate change as being progressive reasons, reasons which are tied to economics and the philosophy of user-pay. I will get back to that, but I just want to point out that this country does not make very much sense from an economic point of view. This country is not something that would go together in an economic textbook if you were drawing boundaries and throwing people together. To quote a recent article by Don McGillivray:

The fact that Canada exists shows that an economic absurdity can become a political reality.

I think when we review the history behind the Crow rate we will see that there were a great many of what would now be called economic absurdities but which were in fact political realities which had to be faced up to and solved with a creative pragmatism in order that Canada could continue as a country.

Canada developed in spite of geographical, language, racial and cultural barriers. There are two languages and many races and cultures. No one, Mr. Speaker, would ever propose a change to the basic and fundamental framework of this country by saying that, because of economics, bilingualism should no longer exist. We live with the cost of two languages, and there is some cost, with no complaint because it is part of the way this country was put together. It came about because we did not want to fight a big and expensive war over it. We decided that compromise made more sense than worrying about future economic considerations. So we have a bilingual country. The same thing applies to the signing of native treaties. We guaranteed certain native rights, not thinking about future economics but because it made sense, at the time,