

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

good theory and it works well. We who believe in conservatism believe in competition, but competition in transportation does not exist on the Prairies. It works well where there are ocean ports, Great Lakes water systems or the St. Lawrence Seaway, but in land-locked regions of the continent there is no competition. That is why iron and steel products can be moved from Toronto to Vancouver and back to Calgary cheaper than they can be moved from Toronto to Calgary. That is why we need to have some mechanisms like the Crow rate in place for the movement of our products.

● (1610)

What is the crass Liberal response to such a system? It is for the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) to say in Jasper that because western people did not vote Liberal, the advantage of the Crow rate, which has been a historic fact for 85 years, will go to the backbench Liberal caucus. And today we have had notice of closure.

All this defies our history, Mr. Speaker. It rips apart our past in a way that hurts me deeply, coming from this Minister who was co-author of the Pepin-Robarts report. That report deals with national unity and contains such comments as the following:

The effective and harmonious operation of any federal system depends very much upon the degree to which the central institutions are considered in their operation to be fully representative of the major groups within the federation.

I could quote paragraph after paragraph of that Pepin-Robarts report to illustrate the importance of national unity and the importance of understanding the variation in the fabric of this country. Yet the Minister who co-authored the report is engaged in disunifying our nation and has raised the anger of western Canada against central Canadian institutions. What an unfortunate fact that is, Mr. Speaker. We need change but that change must be fair, predictable and compatible with our history.

For political reasons the Minister has now decided to pay 100 per cent to the railway. During the Easter break I called seven meetings in my constituency to advocate the acceptance by people of some change and to point out that some change could be for the better, not necessarily for the worst. Now I take the position that no change is better than any change at all if this is the position the Minister intends to take.

If all the moneys are to go to the railways and if there is a target of performance for the railways to move grain to portside, then the instinct of railway companies will be to move that grain which is closest and on through rail lines where unit trains can be developed. This could be the death knell for every branch line in western Canada. Hundreds of communities could go down the pipe. Paying the money to the railways will mean there is no incentive for the railway companies to chase a profit. They will take the easiest grain, move it to portside and the farmer be damned. Yet the Minister believes that program will be to the advantage of western Canada.

What we have is not an economic response, but rather a crass political reflex. The Liberal instinct is for survival and not for national development. This is a disappointment.

Because of the Minister's role with the Pepin-Robarts Commission I would have thought he would have understood the impact on the country.

It was a mistake to believe that the Prairies are homogeneous. That is another symbol of central Canadian thinking. They talk about the Prairies as they talk about a lump. Why is it that people in Manitoba who are growing lentils are compared with the wheat grower of Saskatchewan or the barley grower of Alberta? What we need to understand is the diversity and the mix of our economy and that we can develop measures to enrich the economy of all parts of the country.

I came to Parliament wanting very much for the country to get to the point where we would never again talk about English and French or about East and West. Every time those notions are put forward it hurts. This is Canada and we should be able to believe in Canada; we should be able to have policies that are good for all parts of Canada, without this divisiveness which is forced upon us by Liberals.

I think the Minister should take the following policies under consideration, Mr. Speaker. He should put forward three options. First, an option of 100 per cent payment to the railways; second, an option of paying 50 per cent to the railways and 50 per cent to farmers; and a third option based on the Gilson proposition of 19 per cent to the railways and 81 per cent to farmers. Then he should let the producers make the selection. It might be that Saskatchewan would choose to pay 100 per cent to the railways or Manitoba might choose the fifty-fifty proposition and Alberta the Gilson proposal. Would that not reflect the differences in our country? Would it not show that Alberta has almost as much economic impact from secondary processing as it does from grain, whereas the Saskatchewan impact comes almost totally from grain?

Surely the Minister could build enough flexibility into his program to put it forward perhaps on a five-year basis, with the choice of the producers to be frozen later. It is wrong to take a historic Magna Carta to western Canada and twist it to the advantage of central Canada.

The Gilson Report was a compromise. The Minister's announcement in Winnipeg on February 1 was a compromise to a compromise. His final legislation is a sell-out of western Canada that has angered many, has deeply hurt people and has ruined the economies of the Provinces, particularly Alberta. For the Government to believe that in the interests of survival of the Liberal Party it is justified in this measure, defies the reasons for the federation of this country in the first place. The final legislation is absolutely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

This summer when central Canadians visit the Calgary Stampede they will probably be in a building called "Big Four". It gets its name because at one time four ranches extended from the Waterton Lakes at the British Columbia border to the Saskatchewan border. Those four huge ranches ran thousands of head of cattle. When the Minister recognizes the history of that Province and recognizes that he has damaged the cattle industry in the far West in a significant way, he will see that he has not just destroyed that economy