

Western Grain Transportation Act

I have done my best to assist Hon. Members with the interpretation of Standing Orders, Beauchesne and Madam Speaker's remarks, and I would suggest that debate continue, unless, of course, the House wishes me to put the previous question.

Some Hon. Members: Question, question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is the House ready for the question? The Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) rises on a point of order.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I certainly respect your interpretation, but nowhere in the Speaker's ruling is found the word "negatived" or the indication that it may be passed in the affirmative. The ruling simply reads:

—that the motion on the previous question is not closure, because after the House votes on the previous question—

It does not say whether it is negatived or passed in the affirmative. It simply reads, "after the House votes on the previous question". That is very clear, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Question, question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is the House ready for the question? Does the Hon. Member for Comox-Powell River rise on a point of order or in debate?

Mr. Ray Skelly (Comox-Powell River): Mr. Speaker, I rise in debate. It seems that my hon. colleagues on the Liberal side are again quite prepared to prevent debate on this issue.

It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the question that is before us tonight and has been before us for some time is of serious and extended concern to the people of Canada and that the Government has in fact imposed closure on this particular motion. Closure is understood as a mechanism by which debate is brought to a halt and the House is forced to divide on a question without having had, on an issue of this importance I would suggest, a proper opportunity to judge a number of alternatives. The Government has selected the course of action it wishes to follow. It has selected a course of action that is opposed by a large number of people in Canada and particularly by a large number of people in western Canada who will be harmed by this legislation.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there are groups in the country that wish to see this legislation go ahead because of a serious need for improvement of the transportation system. Unfortunately, these groups are willing, because of the desperate need to get local economies going in certain regions of the country, to load the burden of paying for the rail system improvements upon a specific group of people, the people of the western farming community. It is unfortunate that the Government would see fit to place this kind of a burden on those people and to place other Canadians who depend upon an efficient transportation system in a position where the only way to develop and improve the rail system that is so desperately needed is to put the necks of fellow Canadians on the block. This is what has ultimately happened.

It strikes me that the necks that will eventually wind up on the block are those of the Members of the Liberal Party who presently form the Government of Canada. There is no doubt in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that they will pay a terrible price for what they have done to Canadians.

The other unfortunate aspect of this debate is the complicity of Members of the Conservative Party with Members of the Liberal Party. We in the House have no doubt that Conservative Members have aided and abetted the passage of this legislation without adequate consideration of the underlying principles of the Bill. "Do it to your neighbour before he does it to you", is the Conservative way. In that light, we can understand their complicity with the Liberal Party on this particular situation.

Throughout the debate, I have been disappointed by some of the propositions put forward by my Conservative colleagues. They have suggested that the Liberal way is no good, and yet in aiding and abetting the Liberals, they are allowing that way to proceed. If they were in fact able to put up sufficient speakers to express the concerns of their local constituents, we would see a much fuller debate on this Bill.

Mr. Mazankowski: Nonsense.

Mr. Skelly: It is also interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that Conservative Members, under the previous Conservative Government, said that improvements to the rail system were on the way, that there would have been no problem, and that it is the fault of the NDP that the Conservative Party hit the bricks. I think that, for the edification of the House and the country, we should look at what happened to that Government in retrospect. One of its biggest problems was its failure to deliver on the transportation system and failure to deliver on most systems in the country.

Mr. Benjamin: They hired a fellow to write this Bill.

Mr. Skelly: As my colleague, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), has pointed out, it was those people opposite who put this particular solution that imposes such hardship on the farming community in the West afoot. There is no doubt that Conservative Members, in complicity with their colleagues across the floor, their bedfellows as it were, have laid this curse upon the West.

To suggest that the New Democratic Party has somehow caused a problem by kicking out the previous Conservative Government is false. Believe me, Mr. Speaker, it was the people of Canada who threw it out. They threw it out for moving a Canadian embassy to Jerusalem. They threw it out for its oil pricing policy. It is of no use to say that its rotten policy was any easier to swallow than is the current rotten policy put in place by the Liberal Government. What is the difference between one curse and another?

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker the Conservative Party of Canada is supporting an amazing position at this time, one that its Leader will ultimately support. I am speaking of its