

Western Grain Transportation Act

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Now I am in politics and work for something like 50 cents an hour.

Mr. Benjamin: You are like the railways. You are overpaid.

Mr. Pepin: Grossly.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The only time that the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) makes an effective statement is when he is either behind the curtains or in the Members' lobby.

Now that I have established the fact that there has been no objection on the part of the Government to the fundamental statements, is it not fair for us to assume that this is an important and justifiable amendment that should be brought forward in this particular legislation? I say to Your Honour, with the greatest of deference with regard to some of the contrary arguments, that, in my estimation, it is the most helpful and reasonable amendment that could be introduced, and we have not heard any objection to its being inconsistent with the intentions of the Government. It is one which will make the legislation far more clear in terms of interpretation by the courts.

● (1530)

I go back to the original proposition. If that is not the case, then it is a very simple matter for Government Members, Members on the Treasury bench, the Minister of Transport, or whoever, to stand up and simply say that this is not an acceptable amendment because these are not the intentions of the Government of Canada with respect to the legislation contained in Bill C-155.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): As was indicated earlier through an exchange between the Hon. Member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) and myself, I was not clear whether Hon. Members were continuing to rise on points of order. I think the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) has indicated that he wishes to rise on a point of order. Unless Hon. Members indicate that they want to rise on a point of order with those words, it is difficult for the Chair to know. The understanding of the Chair at the moment is that no other Hon. Member, other than the Hon. Member for Assiniboia, wishes to contribute to the points of order. But, of course, I will be guided by any Hon. Member who stands up in that regard.

Mr. Len Gustafson (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a point of order with regard to the acceptability of Motion No. 1 as it relates to Bill C-155. For the record let me read what Bill C-155 states:

An Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof.

Relating to Motion No. 1 put forward by the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) in his opening statement on the motion he very clearly indicated, in much the same wording as the Bill:

It is hereby declared that an economic, efficient and reliable grain transportation system making the best use of all available modes of transportation at the lowest total cost is essential to protect the interests of the grain producers—

Without elaborating on the compatibility of the two statements, namely and on Motion No. 1 and the Bill, the relevance, I would like to go on a little further to subparagraph (a). It deals directly with international grain prices and with freight. It deals with matters relating particularly to grain, its production and transportation. Subparagraph (b) reads:

(b) the railway companies and the Government of Canada accept a continuing obligation to provide producers with a special transportation rate for the movement of grain.

What could be more relevant to the debate on such a Bill than Subparagraph (b) of Motion No. 1? Subparagraph (c) reads:

(c) the Government of Canada makes an annual financial contribution to the grain transportation system to ensure fair compensation for the movement of grain.

If there were any motion which would be relevant, Mr. Speaker, certainly it would be the one put forward by the Hon. Member for Vegreville. Again and again it deals with the product of western Canada with which the Bill deals. The product is named in the Bill as grain, and the amendments are in consequence thereof. This is directly relevant to the Bill. If Motion No. 1 is not relevant, then none of the motions are relevant.

Subparagraph (d) of Motion No. 1 reads:

(d) the railway companies provide adequate equipment and plant capacity to move grain efficiently and reliably.

And Subparagraph (e) reads:

(e) the natural advantages of western agriculture are recognized and strengthened.

At this point I would like to read from the policy statement on western rail transportation the words of the former Minister of Transport who said much the same thing as is said in Motion No. 1. He said:

The Government believes that the arrangements it is now seeking are as important to western economic development in the future as the Statutory rate was in the past. To grain farmers no less than to any group in western Canada, it is essential to have the assurance for the future of a healthy and efficient transportation system capable of moving increasing volumes of their product. In addition, the Government believes that the measures it is proposing will broaden the range of choices open to agricultural producers and thereby lead to a stronger and more diversified western economy.

In a statement of purpose put forward by the former Minister of Transport, we have almost the same wording as that put forward by the Hon. Member for Vegreville in his motion. Subparagraph (g) of Motion No. 1 reads:

(g) grain producers receive adequate guarantees of system performance and service.

I want to contend that this is most important to the Bill and it is not important to the outcome of the Bill. I would like to say at this point that I believe the committee did an in-depth study and it was dedicated to finding some very serious solutions to problems that exist. We had witnesses' testimony from right across the country, including Ottawa, as to how relevant that is. We heard representation from western pro-