

Western Grain Transportation Act

wherein this Party is asking for the removal of Clause 17(4) which states:

The Administrator, on behalf of the Minister, may enter into agreement to provide for the movement of grain by motor vehicle transport where, in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers.

I believe it is only common sense that our request should be agreed to. We have seen a spectacle today which is hard to believe. On the opposite side of the House we saw the former Minister of Transport sitting there while the Conservatives stood up to support this legislation. Is that not something! To suggest that we should be looking to the trucking industry as an alternative way of transporting our grains is unbelievable. In April, the Government came forward with legislation requesting that moneys be made available for the transfer to other forms of energy, when one of the most efficient forms of energy is the rail transportation system. Transportation of our grain by rail is the ultimate method and we should not be looking at giving subsidies to trucking firms.

I can remember back in the 1950s when I was working for CP Rail in Revelstoke. One day all the officials came to town. They were worried about the trucks taking over. They had a theme at that time, "Ship by Rail". They were telling us all about how it would be. A list compiled by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool of rail lines under study by Transport Canada was printed in the *Western Producer*. This list was under study in order to do away with these branch lines. There are 20 of them under the CNR which are under study. There are another 19 under CP Rail. According to this article there are 817 miles of CN Rail which presently serves 8,001 producers which is being looked at. If this kind of legislation is allowed, these producers will be forced to look at alternative means, such as trucking. The Canadian Pacific has 19 rail lines which serve 1,145 miles which are being considered at this time. We know what takes place at these hearings. We know the railway jobs which are lost. We know the maintenance jobs which are lost.

There are 1733 producers who will be affected if trucking is considered. To put that amount of traffic on the highways is absolutely ludicrous. I have been to these hearings and heard discussions on rail line abandonments before. The argument which is put forward is that transportation is available now. The trucks can do it. CPR has so many trucks. CNR has so many. There is Smith Transport. They will name all their subsidiary groups. If it were the individual farmer who would get the benefits from this perhaps we could see some rationale. But for the Conservatives to stand up in this House and support that kind of legislation is exactly what it is doing in British Columbia. Conservatives and Liberals are joining together, forming what they call the Social Credit Party of British Columbia.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Parker: Sure they are. We know it. Everyone else knows it. And the Conservatives talk about us in the New Democratic Party. We heard the Hon. Member for Ontario (Mr. Fennell) talk about how the NDP defeated this Government in 1979, all 32 Members. It was the people of Canada.

When are the Conservatives ever going to recognize the fact that the people of Canada would not accept the kind of legislation they would bring forward?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order, please. I would invite the Hon. Member to return to the amendment now before the House.

Mr. Parker: Mr. Speaker, it appears that some Hon. Members in the House can refer to what takes place, but others cannot.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I am sure the Hon. Member is not imputing discrimination on the part of the Chair. I must admit that it is sometimes difficult for the Chair to follow the logic of the arguments of Hon. Members. However, in this case I must say that there was a clear-cut departure from the amendment now before the House. I invite the Hon. Member to address his remarks to that amendment.

● (1740)

Mr. Parker: Mr. Speaker, what I said was not with reference to the Chair, it was with regard to prior speakers.

I say it is imperative that we take a serious look at what is happening. If we are indeed looking at abandonment of some lines, then the railways should be told, "You will pay the producer's cost to carry his grain to the main line". Then we would be doing something constructive instead of using taxpayers' money to pay the railways which are not living up to their obligations. I urge the Conservatives to look at that theory rather than get in bed with the Liberal Government and its theory of subsidizing the trucking companies, which in fact will be the railways companies, whether it be CN, what they call a Crown corporation although certainly not what I call a Crown corporation, or CP rail.

Mr. McKnight: Nationalize them.

Mr. Parker: There are other ways of doing this without paying subsidies for trucking. To look at the idea of trucks hauling grain is like trying to fill a wheelbarrow with a spoon. It is only common sense to have a transportation system which collects the grain, brings it to the main line, and helps the communities to survive through the use of country elevators and so on. If we allow this amendment, then we are opening the door for the railways to abandon more branch lines. We cannot allow that to happen. We in this Party recognize the ramifications of this legislation and we want to ensure that this does not happen.

I want to get back to the subject of energy costs, Mr. Speaker. Surely to goodness if we are in the midst of conserving our energy, we would not be looking at this kind of system of gathering grain and shipping it to the railhead or ports. It does not make sense. On one hand you give grants to conserve energy, on the other hand you give grants to the trucking industry which will use more energy. Every railroader knows the significance of branch lines and the importance of jobs in those communities on the rail system. For us to even consider