

Adjournment Debate

Western Canadian farmers paid \$131 million to move export grain under the Crow freight rate in the 1981-82 crop year. This grain, in turn, contributed \$6.3 billion to the balance of trade.

I believe this is the farmer's fair contribution to the Canadian economy.

Many of these letters have come from young farmers who have been fighting tooth and nail to establish themselves in the agricultural industry. They have faced a dramatic increase in the price of land in the last ten years, coupled with overwhelming increases in the cost of machinery. The extra increase in freight charges could make it impossible for new people, even as part of a family transfer, to enter the business.

● (1805)

What this Bill is about is consolidation of the means of production, about fewer elevator points, fewer branchlines, high costs for farmers, and yes, maybe efficiency. But what is there in it for most Saskatchewan farmers? There is absolutely nothing. Any increase in efficiency, if that occurs, will be at their expense. And that is what is so unsatisfactory. This proposal ignores the contribution of rural society to our social fabric.

Mr. Justice Emmett Hall has been a fierce advocate of the western farmer. The Hall Commission on grain handling and transportation came to the conclusion that the principle of statutory rates should stay. It reads, in part:

Regardless of what rate may be set for the transport of grain to export position, that rate must be statutory, not variable. Anything else would be a violation of promises made to the producers of western Canada.

The promises to western Canadians are about to be broken. I speak very much against the use of closure on such an important issue at this time by this Government and it will rue the day it tries to use a heavy-handed, oppressive and non-democratic approach with respect to an issue so important to all of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport): I have just a few words, Mr. Speaker. For somebody whose freedom has been muzzled, the Hon. Member has had a good day. Three times today he has taken part in the debate.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: I have only just begun.

Mr. Pepin: I wish him greater freedom elsewhere if he thinks he can find it.

On the urgency of the debate I put on record a number of quotations the other day and I will not repeat them. My hon. friend says I took them out of context. I wish he had demonstrated that instead of just saying it. And this afternoon again from a great number of Members on the opposite side of the House, from Medicine Hat, from Lisgar and what not the thought was repeatedly expressed that something had to be done. The Hon. Member for Crowfoot (Mr. Malone) invented a new approach. There is a hurry if the Government is going to do what he wants the Government to do, and there is no hurry if the Government is not going to do what he wants it to do.

Mr. Hargrave: That is if you do the right thing.

Mr. Pepin: That is an interesting concept and thought. From that point of view no Government could act in the country at all because usually there is a nice distribution of opinion on all sides.

When speaking in the west during the last two years I have repeatedly said that I would hate to see the face of the Minister of Transport four or five years from now—whoever he or she may be, hopefully it will be a she—when confronted with the problems that will be before us then if we do not move now. We will have lost sales. We will not have increased our production, our exports, our fabrication, our transformation and what not, and losses in the billions of dollars—\$2.5 billion, \$3 billion—in the early years of the next decade will occur. It is really with that thought in my mind for the last three years that I have worked. Unfortunately, I have not been able to accommodate everyone. Even the Hon. Member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Hargrave) and the Hon. Member for Crowfoot will agree that their side is divided very, very greatly on this matter.

Mr. Hargrave: You just brought us all together.

Mr. Pepin: I hope at the end of this exercise people will agree to compromise. Nobody will get 100 per cent of what he thinks should be done. Maybe everybody will get 60 per cent.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS—MANUFACTURE OF ROLLING STOCK. (B) NOVA SCOTIA STEEL PLANTS

Hon. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, on March 10 in the absence of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) I raised a question with the then Minister of State for Economic Development concerning the situation at the Hawker Siddeley plant in Trenton, Nova Scotia. I raised the question with that Minister because he has an important jurisdiction over the creation of jobs.

This particular industry, while it is reliant to a great extent on railway rolling stock, also produces other components of benefit to heavy industry, including transport and shipping. However, what concerned me at the time was that at a point in the economic cycle of our country where jobs are badly needed, we appear to have a precedent being created by Canadian National Railways getting into the manufacture of new rolling stock. I think this is a very undesirable situation, particularly when there are very capable industries in the private sector that can do this more cheaply and efficiently. It sets a continuing precedent as well for other Crown corporations, for example, Air Canada being more active in refurbishing jet engines, or CN Marine getting further involved in ship design. Inevitably this will lead to higher cost and less efficiency.

● (1810)

I am not one of those who believe in selling key Crown corporations on an indiscriminate basis just to get rid of them, but I believe they should be pruned and their activities restricted to their original purpose. They should not be allowed to