

Adjournment Debate

1988 and these products will then be going through the urban areas between Montreal right through the middle of Toronto, and from Toronto to North Bay.

Our fight is not just our fight alone. Our fight is also the fight of those urban communities throughout southern Ontario. The Mayor of Toronto should be in on this. The Ontario Government and the Quebec Government should be included. They are the ones who will have to provide the moneys for the rebuilding of the highways and all the expenses in order to take on these 14,000 transports, plus, from all the other areas in eastern Ontario and western Quebec. This issue is far from dead and cannot be accepted.

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the Minister, as do all Hon. Members in the House, shares the concerns of the Hon. Member, particularly those of us who come from the regions. We all know the railways were built originally to serve this country, but it is true as well that the nature of the country has changed. We do have more extensive highway networks. As all Hon. Members know, CN finds itself in a very difficult financial situation. It is an established fact that CN has substantial surplus rail capacity. Two thirds of its trackage carries no more than 10 per cent of its traffic. Clearly, that cannot carry on. Clearly we have to find ways to ensure that the size of its plant is appropriate to the size of its business. CN has repeatedly stated that it does not want to lose business, and I think that is axiomatic. It has an investment there and surely it will make all sorts of efforts to try to preserve it and get a return on its capital rather than to abandon it. CN is continuing to examine ways to improve service to its communities. It is examining the kind of line network it will need and will be able to support in the market-place a decade from now.

The Minister was at the standing committee this afternoon for the estimates. My friend, in his seven minute presentation, did a fine job in setting out some of the broader socio-economic context. I wish he had been there this afternoon to put that on the record because it was a good presentation. It may well be that the urban people should be involved in this and be prepared to indicate that they are prepared to face extra taxes. That is really what my friend is asking. He is asking the broad Canadian community to pay substantial increased taxes to keep a line going through a part of the country that is clearly not economical in itself. We on the Prairies are facing that same argument with respect to branch line abandonment on grain, which is very expensive.

I can assure the Hon. Member that the railway will have to apply to the CTC for permission to abandon each line. I think in a policy context, we have to face the reality that there may be lines which just have to go.

● (1820)

Surely our goal and objective is to provide a procedure, and we have done that under the proposed National Transportation Act. It will be substantially better than the old Railway Act.

All three Parties have had input into the proposed National Transportation Act. There were a substantial number of amendments made during committee consideration, and it will come before the House very shortly at report stage. If my friend opposite looks at that legislation, he will see that there is a very sophisticated appeal process, a process that will, hopefully, protect the public interest. That is certainly the intent of the Bill.

Socio-economic matters, such as reducing traffic on our highways and restricting the transport of dangerous chemicals through urban areas, can be raised in the appeals process, and hopefully result in wise decisions in the context of the current economic climate, as well as changing demographic and economic infrastructures and the structure of the nation generally.

FARM CREDIT CORPORATION—ENDING OF MORATORIUM ON FARM FORECLOSURES. REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT ESTABLISH LAND BANK RENTAL SYSTEM

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt—Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise as a result of some questions I asked of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) on April 27 last concerning the Government's intention with regard to financing farm credit and providing a stable environment for farmers on the land at this point in time.

What had sparked the questions that particular day was the lifting of the moratorium on Farm Credit Corporation loan foreclosures. I was wondering what future policy the Government was going to be putting forward to provide for a viable agriculture sector and to provide some security of tenure for those either new to farming or continuing in farming.

The Minister at the time pointed out that the lifting of the moratorium was not something to be too concerned about as only 40 or 50 farmers would be losing their land as a result of Farm Credit Corporation foreclosure proceedings. While he did not say so, I believe he meant 40 or 50 farmers per month.

We know now, after analysing the situation and listening to Farm Credit Corporation personnel, that this coming year the Farm Credit Corporation will come into ownership of between 700 and 1,000 farm properties, about half of which they will receive by way of quit claim, where the farmer simply walks away and turns it all over to the Farm Credit Corporation, with the other 50 per cent coming as a result of actions taken and initiated by the FCC. Most will have gone through a debt review board process.

The fact is, the Farm Credit Corporation will be holding an additional 700 to 1,000 farm properties. We heard in testimony from FCC personnel today, for instance, that it has proven virtually impossible for the FCC to lease the properties it holds to existing farmers, and that is particularly true in western Canada. It is unable to get renters even at zero dollars per acre, because the land has been continuously cropped and has been left in bad shape.