

Canada Grain Act

members of the Canadian Grain Commission sit at pleasure to an arrangement where they have tenure. I do not know what the Parliamentary Secretary is talking about when he says there was a ten-year arrangement. Clearly the legislation as it exists today is at pleasure, and there is no guarantee of seven years.

It is not as if this matter has been raised only in the *Manitoba Co-Operator*. It was raised a number of times at other stages. The Government is creating a position by legislation for a member of its own caucus. Bearing in mind the tremendous controversy and publicity which has surrounded thousands of partisan appointments by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), I would think that the Government would not want to bring this kind of aura to the question of agricultural appointments in the West.

● (1420)

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that when, a little over a year ago, the Member for Lisgar was to be appointed to the Canadian Wheat Board, there was such a fuss in western agricultural circles that the Government backed off almost immediately. However, on July 5 *The Toronto Star* reported, "Grain agency posting reported for Tory MP". The article reads:

Progressive Conservative MP Jack Murta, a former cabinet minister, will give up his House of Commons seat and accept a position on the Canadian Grain Commission, a newspaper says. Sources told the Winnipeg Free Press that the Manitoba MP will be appointed a commissioner with the federal grain-regulating agency, at a salary of \$70,000 to \$80,000 a year, within five weeks.

The House of Commons is moving legislation directly to create a position for a Member of Parliament. I do not know whether that involves a question of privilege, but it is unseemly that this Bill is introduced and is being rammed through the House during the last week or so of sittings when we have difficulty getting important pieces of legislation through. These reports indicate that the Government is deliberately creating a seat on the Canadian Grains Commission for the Member who does not want a seat in the House of Commons.

Those are our concerns. When we get to committee we will certainly be moving to amend that section to retain the "at the pleasure" aspect. When the Government came to power it found that to be the most satisfactory arrangement to deal with commissioners and assistant commissioners of the Canadian Grain Commission. If it was satisfactory when they came to power, they should certainly want the same satisfactory arrangement in place when they leave.

Those are our concerns with this legislation. The technical aspects would probably be useful, but we are concerned about the political nature of the amendments as they relate to tenure for the commissioners.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to take a few minutes to speak on this Bill. I have somewhat the same concern that Clause 3, which changes the commissioner's term from "at the pleasure" to seven years,

does guarantee an appointee of the Government a rather long term. It is unfortunate that timing may have caused some of this, but this has become known as the "Murta Bill", which is very unfortunate.

There are a number of things in the Bill which require thorough study by the committee and experts in the industry. Consequently, there is a great need for it to go to committee before being passed.

For example, the Bill contains the suggestion that the licensing of varieties is not at present acceptable in our grain trade. The suggestion is that it is still a little bit up in the air. We should study the licensing of varieties. There is no doubt that it can be improved and it should be thoroughly studied by the industry.

The Government is to be congratulated on the very good job it has done of consulting with the industry to establish what is needed. That was done between the bureaucrats or drafters of the Bill, but Members of Parliament are not cognizant of that.

There is a section in the Bill which takes away the necessity of Parliament to ratify changes in grades and makes it a bureaucratic decision. I do not believe that this is necessarily good. Parliament has not necessarily done that always in the past, but it has always had the authority to intervene if there was a need to do so. Consequently, I think that is one of the areas which we need to study.

I have no particular objection to the suggestion of privatization of certain of the Canadian Grain Commission's functions, but we should look at that very thoroughly. I have been assured by the Minister and the commission itself that there is no intention to dilute the effectiveness of the commission. If that is so, I wonder why this particular clause is included. On that basis I would allow this Bill to go to committee.

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I will not take very long to speak on this Bill. I want to preface my remarks by saying that they cast no personal reflection on the Member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta). I regard him as one of the Hon. Members of this House. I recall with strong respect the speech he made on capital punishment, which I considered to be one of the finer speeches I have heard in this House. As a matter of fact, I understand the Member is now a constituent of mine, having bought a house in Winnipeg in preparation for his new standing in life.

The fact is that this thing stinks. There is no other way of putting it. I want to appeal to some Members on the government side who may have some shred of integrity left. The fact is that they fired people on the Grain Commission who were "at pleasure" without severance. They cut off their careers. They did not give a care about their future, their livelihood, or their families. They just fired them. They threw them out on the streets. They are now trying to protect one of their Members by changing the law in order to get a guaranteed seven-year appointment.