

Western Grain Transportation Act

elevators. In those days governments did implement their campaign promises, at least in some manner.

Mr. Pepin: John A. Macdonald?

Mr. Althouse: No, this was the provincial Governments in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and they were Liberal Governments. They contacted all of the elevator companies asking them to sell their weak and lame elevators to be used in putting together a government elevator company. The companies sent along their poor elevators and even sent along the poor managers who made those elevators such low volume points. They put the worst delivery points and the worst management into one company. The result was a government-owned operation that was not as good as the businesses around it. It was almost a failure, so much so that the farmers finally took the elevators over as co-operatives and they became a success almost overnight.

The first Wheat Board was introduced as a wartime measure during World War I. It was a compulsory Wheat Board. It bought and sold grain to the advantage of the farmers. The main difference with the Wheat Board idea over the private grain market was very noticeable then, and it is still recognized by most farmers. It is that the grain is bought at an initial price at the elevator and resold. The main difference is that the surplus from the reselling does not go to the shareholders of the grain company, as it did under the old system, but to the producers. That is what the final payment has been all about to this day. It is taking the profit extracted from the careful marketing of the grain and returning it to the man on the land who produced the goods.

● (1130)

To that extent, it is a slightly Marxist concept and one which some Members of other Parties have some difficulty with because it is a return to labour. It is the old labour value theory which is sometimes seen, even after 50 years of operation, as a very radical concept.

For that reason, I believe, after the First World War was over, government dropped that organization like a hot potato but farmers began agitating for a continuation of it. The government did not seem willing to do this so it went the co-operative route and set up the Wheat Pools with contracts that the producer signed saying that he would sell all of his grain through the pools for five years. That worked well until the 1930s when the grain market collapsed and the pools almost collapsed.

I believe that all of us remember that during the 1930s there was a Conservative Government under Mr. Bennett. In the dying gasps of his administration, he decided that since he was going to go out to face the people and since he had not had a very good run during his years of power, he would introduce a voluntary participation Wheat Board. This was done in 1935. Producers had the option of selling to the Wheat Board or not.

In 1942, again during wartime, we returned to a compulsory participation Wheat Board. Quotas were installed during that

time and by 1946 and 1948 barley and oats were included in the operations of the Wheat Board as well.

The only other events of historic consequence occurred in 1959 and 1960, again under a Conservative Government. Wheat Board participation had been compulsory for quite some time and marketing through the Wheat Board was compulsory. There was a move afoot, I think for philosophical reasons, to reduce the power of the Wheat Board over selling feed grains. During that era the Hon. Member who now represents Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton), and who was at that time the Minister in charge, freed up part of the authority of the Wheat Board and put the selling of feed grains within provincial boundaries back on the open market.

Some years later, from 1969 to 1971, Otto Lang, who was then the Minister in charge of the Wheat Board, made it possible to sell—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): Order. I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but his time has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, I too am happy to rise to speak to Motions Nos. 39 and 40, the former being introduced by the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson) and the latter by the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). As my colleague, the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse), has indicated, the two motions are quite similar but we believe that the motion introduced by the Hon. Member for Regina West is clearer and more certain, and I would hope that Members of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Government will support that motion.

I was very happy to have been afforded the opportunity this morning to listen to the historical background of the Canadian Wheat Board, because I think it is extremely important as we discuss each of these amendments that each Hon. Member of the House has a grasp of the historical background of the subject we are dealing with. I feel that when dealing with legislation that will change a historical reality in the country, it is extremely important that all Members who will vote on that legislation appreciate what they are dealing with.

To digress for a moment, I feel, for instance, that if a person is not completely aware of the historical background of a subject, he will ordinarily make very bad decisions about the present issue. I will return to the motion in a moment, but as a case in point, much of the American policy in Central America right now is based on the fact that the Americans have no concept of the history of the region. I bring that point up because that is the same kind of mistake that can be made with a Bill like this if one believes that history began yesterday afternoon at 3.15.

Oftentimes when a government makes profound judgments about the future, those judgments are out of context because