

Western Grain Transportation Act

weakening both the Wheat Board and the Prairie Pools. The Hon. Member for Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn) and the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) heavily attacked the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) on subjects he never brought up in his speech or presentation at all. Methinks they protest too much.

These motions deal with the need to protect the Wheat Board, something we should not have had to discuss in this particular Bill. Unfortunately, orderly marketing is not a central belief of either the Conservative or Liberal Parties and they are quite willing to attack and weaken it whenever they possibly can.

The Canadian Wheat Board is probably one of the most accountable agencies in Canada. The money used to operate it comes entirely from the producers, not a cent from the Government of Canada. It produces an annual report which is delivered to the farmers in every community concerned. Members of the Board fan out and speak to farmers in communities in all parts of the prairie Provinces. As I said, these kinds of motions should not have been necessary, but they are because the other Parties have coalesced to weaken the Wheat Board and they decided that the Administrator will have more power than the Wheat Board.

Mr. McDermid: You know that is not true and you do not believe it.

Mr. Hovdebo: I hope the Conservative Party will vote against Motion No. 39 and vote for Motion No. 40 because it covers the area better than Motion No. 39.

In this area of grain transportation, Mr. Speaker, we have a combination of statutes, regulations and Orders in Council which are administered by different entities. Therefore, it is necessary to protect certain things in this Bill which we know are the responsibility of certain agencies. In this case we need to protect the Canadian Wheat Board and, in the same clause but not in these amendments, the Canadian Grain Commission. Right now the Governor in Council, under this Bill, can change the powers of the Canadian Grain Commission, the Canadian Wheat Board and the grain transportation co-ordinator. He can take powers from the Canadian Wheat Board and give them to the Administrator, take them from the Administrator and give them to the Grain Commission. Therefore, it is necessary to take an amendment like that presented by the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), and put it in the Bill to protect the existing powers of these agencies. But as the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West said, the wording of Motion No. 39 is so broad, it does not really protect those powers. We need to say that the powers are protected as they exist in the Canadian Wheat Board Act, not just broadly protected because that does not specifically say they are protected in the way we would like to see them protected.

The intent of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is basically, and I suppose inevitably, an attempt to allocate to the railways the right of return in the movement of cars, but it does not establish how those cars will be allocated. At present that is done by the Wheat Board with the assistance of the Grain

Transportation Administrator, who has the right to interfere or adjust to some extent. However, I think we should go back, as did the Hon. Member for Vegreville, to the presentation made by the Canadian Wheat Board Commissioner. Here we have a very good example of selective quotations by the Hon. Member for Vegreville because I am going to read the same quotation he read except I will read another line. Mr. Jarvis said:

"It is an economic fact in the grain industry . . . transportation and sales are inextricably linked; but transportation must effectively serve sales needs. The current system with the GTA making the initial splits in cars has not become too cumbersome. But a danger exists. Policy makers—and we say this to you—should be very careful in not separating further the vital link between transportation and sales.

The implication is that we cannot take the allocation of cars away from the Canadian Wheat Board. We must protect that power of the Wheat Board and do it in every way we can. The Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee also made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Transport and said exactly the same thing, if not in exactly the same words. Mr. Gibbings, who had just completed about 12 years or 15 years as a Wheat Board Commissioner and who was before that the President of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, also stated that:

It is imperative that grain sales and grain transportation not be separated. The Canadian Wheat Board must be able to arrange the transportation of its own product or it cannot fulfil its obligations to western grain producers or their customers overseas. The board's marketing success, meaning sales success, depends on its ability to make day-by-day or even hour-by-hour decisions on grain movement. Its flexibility must not be compromised.

● (1710)

These agencies, which know what is going on in the movement of grain across the country, and know that we have been the most successful country in the world in terms of moving grain considering our most difficult circumstances, all say that we must leave the power with the Canadian Wheat Board. It is therefore very important that the best of these two amendments be passed.

As I mentioned earlier, I hope the Conservative Party will look at the two motions and choose the best one to protect the producers of the West. There are no ifs and buts about it.

The legislation is designed to gather, under a new agency, the power and authority presented and exercised by the Canadian Wheat Board. What we must do is to make sure that the powers that make the Wheat Board successful are not undermined by this legislation.

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, the common effect of these two motions is to enshrine in Bill C-155 the current role of the Canadian Wheat Board with respect to car allocation. In Motion No. 39, proposed by the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), there appears the following phrase:

—to make available the quantities and types of grain necessary to achieve sales commitments—

It is not clear whether such a responsibility is already defined in the Canadian Wheat Board Act, nor is it entirely clear what the legal intent of the phrase is. It may be an