

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Is the Minister going to enter the debate at this point?

Mr. Bill McKnight (Kindersley-Lloydminster): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief in my remarks in support of Motion No. 39 and Motion No. 40. I would like to say something that may seem strange to some of my colleagues, but I think the last spokesman for the New Democratic Party set a new tone for the debate. It is unfortunate that the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), in beginning the debate for his Party, made some almost incredible statements for one who we have said throughout this debate has spent more time in committee than any other Member from his Party. I compliment the Hon. Member for Kootenay West (Mr. Kristiansen) on his tone and contribution to the debate.

We are debating two motions that, in the opinion of all Members on this side, actually strengthen the ability of the Canadian Wheat Board to do the job for which it was originally established. There have been criticism from time to time by some Members and I would like to bring the attention of the House to one in particular. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) spoke of my colleague for Bow River (Mr. Taylor). He is a man who has served Canada as an elected Member for more years than I have been alive.

● (1220)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKnight: He has served as a Member of the Legislature in Alberta as well as here in the House of Commons. He also served his country as a member of the Armed Forces during the Second World War. I think any Member who would attack the credibility and ability of someone with that kind of a record should take a look within his soul and at himself to see why that would happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McKnight: Most of us in this House, no matter from where we come, western Canada, central Canada or eastern Canada, realize the importance of the Canadian Wheat Board to the grain producers of western Canada. I do not think that is debatable. The Wheat Board has to be strengthened and it has to be maintained to buy, sell and move grain.

I would like to speak to some of the Members of the Government side who ultimately through the democratic process will have the last say on Motions Nos. 39 and 40. I ask them to think what would happen if we turned the shoe around and put it on the other foot. What would happen if there were amendments put forth that would dilute or may be perceived to dilute the powers of the Canadian Livestock Feed Board which serves the members of Quebec, Ontario, the Atlantic region and British Columbia. If we put forward an amendment that was just perceived in the minds of their constituents to alter the ability of the Canadian Livestock Feed Board to do the job those producers and farmers and feeders in that area rely upon it to do, they would feel betrayed. It is an institution which they know is important to their ability to continue to

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produce livestock and go about their way of earning a living, and they would feel that if that was going to be changed in some way detrimental to the functions of the Board, they would stand, as we on this side have stood, and say "Take a second look".

The Canadian Wheat Board is not another Crown agency. I would surmise the majority of wheat producers and Canadian Wheat Board permit card holders in the western part of Canada do not even think of the Canadian Wheat Board as a Crown agency. They do not think of it as something like CN, Air Canada, Petro-Canada or the post office.

Mr. Malone: Or Canadair.

Mr. McKnight: They think of it as their Canadian Wheat Board, they think it belongs to them. As a matter of fact, it is more than just think, Mr. Speaker. Most producers of grain in western Canada know that the Canadian Wheat Board really does belong to them. Producers pay the operating costs which are taken out of sales, and they elect an advisory committee. The only thing that removes the Canadian Wheat Board from the farmer is Order in Council appointments of commissioners and the guarantee of the public purse as the commitments for initial payments are made. When something happens which makes them say "That is not our Canadian Wheat Board", there will be a lot of concern among Canadian wheat producers in western Canada.

That is why we on this side put forward two amendments. I had the opportunity in committee of moving an amendment similar to the one moved by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson). It was supported by Members of the NDP. We would like to see it supported by all Members in this House. It makes clear the abilities of the Canadian Wheat Board to carry out their duties. I think this amendment does an excellent job, a better job than the amendment in Motion No. 40.

As I read Motion No. 40, the amendment refers to Orders in Council. I am not sure whether that means only Orders in Council under Section 21(k), whether it means Orders in Council relating to the appointment of commissioners, or whether it means Orders in Council relating to the Canadian Wheat Board Act. We have heard some Members say it is a legal definition. Just being a dirt farmer and not knowing that much about legality, I think when doubts are raised as to what is the definition of Order in Council, it means that it should be looked at very closely. In the words of the legal counsel to the committee, the definition put forward by my colleague for Assiniboia fulfils that requirement of establishing without doubt in Bill C-155 the functions and abilities of the Canadian Wheat Board as prescribed by the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

If producers have a feeling that they are losing some control, I do not think the Government that sits opposite or Members in the Opposition would be able to stand still for the hue and cry and for the sheer anger and frustration that producers in western Canada would put forth if they found that any part of this Bill impeded the ability of the Canadian Wheat Board to