

*Private Members' Business*

● (1815)

It would be interesting if they used their own money and had to compete in a world market on the quality of their product and rather than saying that we have this domestic market which has the tariff wall surrounding it, we are going to make movies that everybody in the world is going to clamour to see because of the quality of the story, the quality of the acting, the quality of the distribution?

That is what we should be looking for in our Canada. We can compete with the best in the world in anything, in business, in arts, in film development. If we are going to have crown corporations that have the purview of doling out public money for private purposes, certainly to oversee over these crown corporations is common sense.

I would like to conclude my few moments of discussing this bill, because it is a votable bill, by once again appealing to my hon. colleagues to reconsider the initial response not to support this bill.

The hon. member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt brought this bill to the House with the express intent of ensuring that it was innocuous enough that it could find support on the Liberal benches and with the Bloc as well as a testimony to the fact that on some things, albeit a minor start, the members of Parliament in this House assembled can come together for the right reasons and do the right thing.

It is a tragedy that every time a member gets up to speak, to move a motion or to do something in this House, it is always done on an adversarial position. It need not be that way. Common sense is common sense, whether it originates on the Liberal benches, on the Bloc benches or on the Reform benches.

When we have an opportunity in this House to come together in unity to do the right thing for the right reasons which could have the effect of using taxpayers' money more efficiently, we should seize the opportunity, seize the moment and do the right thing for the right reasons.

**Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak for a few minutes on this bill that is before the House, Bill C-263.

I want to assure the member who just concluded his remarks that my remarks are not made in an adversarial way but just to simply point out how this bill would address the Canadian Wheat Board. I know it is a crown corporation that is of some interest to the Reform Party and it is of some interest to all of us in this House, particularly those who are involved in the agri-food industry.

I want to point out in the next few minutes why this bill is absolutely unnecessary and actually would be doing much of what the Reform Party has faulted governments in Canada for in the past, repeating something that is already done and doing things twice and spending money that is not necessarily spent.

The Canadian Wheat Board was established in 1935 as a marketing agency for western grain farmers. At the time farmers in western Canada wanted a system that would control price fluctuations, distribute delivery opportunity equitably and move the largest volumes of grain at the best possible prices.

That mandate is still the same. The Canadian Wheat Board remains the same now as it was years ago in the mandate that it has, to earn farmers the best possible returns for their wheat and barley. That is exactly what the board has been doing for that 60 years. It has done an excellent job of selling Canadian grain at the best possible prices and then returning as much money as possible to the users of that board, those users being western Canadian farmers.

Although the Canadian board is a crown corporation, its operations are financed by 130,000 grain farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the grain growing areas of British Columbia.

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This in itself makes this crown corporation unlike many of the others. Some crown corporations including the Canadian Wheat Board are exempt from the application of the Financial Administration Act. It is one of the member for Okanagan—Similkameen—Merritt listed this afternoon as being exempt.

With this bill this exemption would be removed and the crown corporations affected by the bill would become subject to a different reporting system with different requirements.

For example, under this bill the Canadian Wheat Board would be required to submit a corporate plan to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for approval by the governor in council. The board would also have to submit an operating and capital budget annually for approval by Treasury Board. This report would then be included in a review by the parliamentary committee.

Finally, the wheat board would be subject to an audit by an outside auditor and possibly the Auditor General of Canada.

There is no doubt in my mind that the objectives of the bill are well intended. I can assure everyone that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the government are in favour of ensuring that the accountability is there. That accountability at the present time is to farmers, the government and to taxpayers.