

Government Orders

I have spoken about the matter before in the House. I have a very relevant concern in that it is a growing industry in my constituency of Kindersley—Lloydminster. It is one of the bright spots in the agricultural industry throughout at least western Canada and possibly other parts of the country as well.

There have been a couple of minor problems, not minor for those involved but minor in the scope of the entire industry. Two facilities ran into disrepute. The one in my constituency was the Klemmer seed company and the other was Pro Star. The producers that delivered to these companies were not adequately protected.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is also aware of some of these concerns and problems. It may be part of the reason some of the current amendments are put forward to amend the Canada Grain Act. However there have been discussions with the industry and it is proposing further changes in the form of a new special crops act that would adequately protect those who deal with this new and growing industry.

In the interim Motion No. 3 would, temporarily at least and ongoing if we did not change the act, allow special crop producers to opt out of the auspices of the Canada Grain Act which was first passed about 1912 and really does not fit the needs of the industry, because they are not Cargill, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool or United Grain Growers. They are much smaller operators, almost taking the form of family farm operations in many instances. They not only provide valuable services to the special crops act but they are extending the viability of many rural communities through employment opportunities and through service to local producers in those areas.

The industry is a very conscientious industry and is promoting changes and regulations to protect producers. It needs time for the government to enact a special crops act so it can function and protect producers who deal with the industry.

Motion No. 3 would allow them to opt out of the auspices of the Canada Grain Act. That is not something that is unheard of in the current situation. For instance, right now feedlots which buy a lot of grain are able to opt out. They must clearly indicate that they are not under the constraints of the Canada Grain Act.

The hon. member for Vegreville has indicated that the same provision should be made available to other players in the industry. They must clearly indicate that they are not under the auspices of the Canada Grain Act so that those who would deal with operations such as Klemmer and Pro Star would not be under any illusions that they were being protected by the Canada Grain Act.

• (1310)

There have been a lot of allegations of political interference particularly in the Klemmer case. We may never know the full story behind that situation, but it is clear producers must be aware of where they are protected by the Canadian Grain Commission and where they are not protected.

With this motion the hon. member for Vegreville is attempting to clarify that and allow the special grains people to opt out so they can bring in their own special crops act, which would clearly protect producers who deal with them. Unlicensed individuals may still buy and sell using Canadian Grain Commission approved grade names if the commission would agree. It could perhaps even charge a modest user fee to provide that service.

As far as Motions Nos. 7 and 8 are concerned, they apparently clarify and revert to how the old act was structured. The amendments as put forward in Bill C-51 would clarify and give far more power to cabinet or to order in council decisions affecting the Canadian Grain Commission. If anything, we should be moving the other way where this quasi-judicial body would be at arm's length and cabinet would not be interfering in the daily work of the Canadian Grain Commission.

I also ask the House to consider support for Motions Nos. 7 and 8 so we can have better legislation to facilitate the work of the industry and we can see it progress rather than revert to the days of 1912.

Mr. Lyle Vanclief (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on the three motions before us in this grouping, the first one being Motion No. 3.

I have to question something because I cannot quite figure out where Reformers are coming from when they talk about wanting some people to opt out. They want the Canadian Grain Commission to make the decision on whether somebody can opt out or cannot opt out. Let us look at the practical application of that. If someone asked for permission to opt out and the Canadian Grain Commission thought there might be some requirement for the elevator or operator and it was not totally satisfied the security was there without a legal bonding or security being posted, the commission could say that he should not opt out. What message does that send?

In other cases, as has been mentioned, some larger grain companies that might be considered to have all kinds of backing could opt out. As the member from the Bloc said, I could see a total breakdown in regulation and therefore deregulation of who was secure and who was not secure.

Having farmed for many years myself, not in the west admittedly but taking grains to elevators, I know farmers are busy. There is an assumption that if we know some elevators