

*Western Grain Transportation Act*

way to create the impression that there was some deep, dark division between the two Opposition Parties on this question. After all, the enemy or, rather, our opponents, especially on the matter of these amendments, are on the other side. I will not call them the enemy because that is not what the spirit of this institution is all about.

● (1210)

In any event, given the substantial agreement that exists between the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party on these two amendments, I would hope that if this debate continues for any extended period we could perhaps have more calm and cool reason in pointing out what small differences may exist between our two positions.

The differences between Motion No. 39 and Motion No. 40 appear to be very small. The Conservative amendment, Motion No. 39, states:

That Bill C-155 be amended in Clause 19 by adding immediately after line 20 at page 10 the following:

(2) The provisions of this Part respecting the duties and functions of the Administrator do not restrict the powers of the Canadian Wheat Board under the Canadian Wheat Board Act to make available the quantities and types of grain necessary to achieve sales commitments on behalf of, and in the interests of producers.

In comparison, Motion No. 40 presented by the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) states:

That Bill C-155 be amended in Clause 19 by striking out lines 27 to 32 at page 10 and substituting the following therefor:

(3) The provisions of this Part respecting the duties and functions of the Administrator do not restrict the powers of the Canadian Wheat Board under section 21(k) of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, or any Orders of the Governor in Council, to make available the quantities and types of grain needed to achieve sales commitments.

Perhaps our amendment is more specific but most observers believe that we are trying to accomplish the same goal. Obviously, the intent of both amendments is to preserve the ability of the Canadian Wheat Board to co-ordinate the movement of grain. Of course the reasons underlining this attempt to find the most effective way to ensure future export sales and the efficient operation of the grain transportation system is to retain the Board's ability to fully coordinate the system.

Unless Clause 19 is amended, it will make the Administrator a virtual transportation czar over the transportation of western grain. That is basically what this party and we understand the Conservative Party have objected to. According to the Government proposal, only the elevator system and the buying and selling of grain would remain outside the powers of this transportation czar. The Wheat Board would effectively lose control over the block system. The Board needs the power to properly order and direct cars to fulfil its mandate. That is the essential reason for the amendment we have put before the House and, I believe, for the amendment the Conservatives placed before the House.

While we do have some differences in philosophy, as has been illustrated by the Hon. Member for Bow River, and other Conservative Members as well as some from my own Party, let us not exaggerate those differences so that it would give the

public a false impression that there is a vast gulf separating us, at least during this part of the debate.

Motion No. 39 attempts to restore the wording that was moved by the Conservatives at the committee stage but weakened by a Liberal subamendment in the committee. The Liberals seem to be unmoved by these appeals and their proposal passed.

Motion No. 40 is basically a stronger version of Motion No. 39 and we believe it is much more in touch with the Canadian Wheat Board Chief Commissioner, Edmund Jarvis, who recommended the wording that the NDP has placed before the House. That wording is found in his brief in which he expressed concern about the shifting of powers to the Grain Transportation Administrator. In arguing for a defence of Section 21(k) of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, the Canadian Wheat Board and our Party are referring to a section which allows the Board, subject only to Order in Council, to provide for the allocation of railway cars available for the shipment of grain at any delivery point to any elevator, loading platform or person at the delivery point. In our view, Motion No. 40 is a better alternative. Motion No. 39 as worded does not replace the existing Section 2 but adds to and confuses it.

Perhaps those are not minor differences but neither are they differences of a nature which justify the exaggerated language and opinions that have been expressed during the course of this reasonably short debate on these motions. Surely there is enough dividing us in our attitude toward institutions such as the Wheat Board, and surely there is enough differing opinion in the House and in the country that legitimately divides us on many serious issues involving the Crow debate and other matters, that we do not have to exaggerate what, on the surface and technically, are relatively minor points.

I submit that Canadians are fed up with hostility being overblown on matters over which the depth of feeling is not really that strong. Why do we not at least get together on those matters on which we can agree? At least as far as the Official Opposition and the NDP are concerned, this is obviously one of those issues where the differences are minor. While the amendments may be relatively important in their impact, I would hope Members on the Government side would pay more heed to the serious arguments that have been made in the midst of the confusion raised by the manufactured antagonism between Conservatives and New Democrats than they did in committee.

I believe that the points we are making are valid. Our proposals will make a difference to the producers and to the Canadian Wheat Board, which has done a reasonably good job on behalf of the grain producers of western Canada and other participants in the Canadian grain industry for many years, despite some of its failings. I would ask the Government to reconsider its position and support either motion—hopefully Motion No. 40—when it comes to a vote.

I thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, and if I have in any way managed to encourage a little more rationality and peace in this place, at least on this issue, I feel I will have performed some useful function in this debate.