

Ministers, who should decide who the system participants are. The Cabinet should decide what aspects of the grain handling system need to be looked at to make it cost effective and efficient in order to meet our commitments to our customers from other nations. But, Mr. Speaker, the intent of the amendments before us today is to restrict the power and authority which the Administrator would have so as to ensure that the system meets those commitments and obligations. Even when one comes from the city, it is a bit of a puzzle why the New Democratic Party would support this Party in its basic thrust to deal with the entire system at one time and then today, move an amendment that would have the effect of restricting the degree to which we can work to make the entire grain handling system a better system. The only explanation is that the New Democratic Party has not done its homework. That was the case in 1979 as well when it brought down a government that was doing good things for the nation and for the West. It threw that Government out of office. Today there is that same lack of research and lack of understanding of the basic implications of the specific words in the motions being moved by the NDP.

● (1550)

I should like to remind Members of the New Democratic Party that in committee they vacillated back and forth on this issue. I can well understand their desire to filibuster the Bill in the House. It has the potential to throw western Canadian farmers into bankruptcy in the same way the National Energy Program threw thousands and thousands of western Canadians out of work and put thousands and thousands of western Canadians into bankruptcy. The piece of legislation before us has that same kind of potential.

If we were to vote for this amendment and take away the powers of the Administrator to deal with the entire system, we would be inviting the system to be overly expensive and not meet the goals and the objectives set out for it. When that happens, all Canadian taxpayers pay for it in one form or another. It is something that is not said in the House often enough to the people in Montreal or Toronto—that what the Government is moving here is a piece of legislation the total impact of which will make the production of grain more expensive. It will result in the cost of a loaf of bread in Montreal or Toronto being greater than it is today.

That is what the Government is doing when it tries to throw this unknown burden on the backs of producers. That is what we would all be doing in this Chamber if we voted for any amendment that would hamstring the ability of the Administrator to make the system less costly. If we lower the cost of transportation we will lower the price of grain. In the retail markets of Toronto and Montreal we will have lowered the cost of meat, lowered the cost of bread, lowered the cost of flour. If we vote for amendments that have the potential to make the system more expensive and to waste money, we will have raised the cost of beef, raised the cost of bread and raised the cost of flour.

Western Grain Transportation Act

I urge Members on all sides of the House to reconsider the amendments and vote them down because they would have the effect of building inefficiencies into the system and, therefore, additional wasteful costs.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting to follow the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes).

An Hon. Member: And pretty difficult.

Mr. Deans: It is easy to follow in the sense that I speak after him, but it is difficult to follow in the sense of understanding what he said.

I noticed with interest his comparison between our position taken in 1979 with regard to the budget of the then Conservative Government and the position we take today with regard to the amendments we have placed before the House.

I want to say something that I know you are well aware of, Mr. Speaker. The decision we took in 1979 was supported wholeheartedly by the people of Canada in February, 1980. The decision we are taking today will be supported wholeheartedly by the people of Canada for years to come. Unfortunately, because of the coalition that has developed between the Government and its Conservative allies, the chance that we will be able to implement what we consider to be a more rational approach to the administration and handling of grain, will not be allowed to occur. I am as positive today about the correctness of what we are doing in these particular amendments as I was about what we did in 1979 in our motion which spoke out clearly against what the Conservatives were trying to do to the country economically.

I want to reinforce that by saying that just as in February, 1980, the people of Canada expressed their opinion, which was exactly the same as ours, that the Conservatives should not be allowed to govern, today, given the opportunity to vote on these three amendments, they would rise en force and say to the Conservatives, "Get out of bed with the Liberals. This is an unholy alliance. You must stop this destruction of the West. We will vote against you on these matters."

I can think of nothing that makes more sense or is more logical than what we are proposing today. You know as I do, Mr. Speaker, that when you give one body authority over another self-regulating body, you just put a further impediment in the way of progress. It is clear to me that we have already established in law and in practice that when you have agencies that currently deal with the handling and disposition of wheat and other grains, but primarily the Wheat Board and the Grain Commission, when you have bodies which have operated as effectively and efficiently as they have over the years and which fully understand the complexities of the marketplace and have been able to develop procedures and processes to gain markets for the farmers of western Canada, the last thing you want is to superimpose another body to second guess them at every turn. But that is what the Government is proposing and that is why we are trying to stop it.