

• (1710 )

It seems to me that if a parliamentary committee were able to take a look at the alternatives, it could examine what is done in other jurisdictions and perhaps it would conclude that what we have now, flawed as it is, is the only alternative and that it is the only workable system. Well, if that is the case, fine. I will accept that verdict. But at this point in time I do believe the situation is worthy of a look. I believe it is worthy of some examination. I do not think we should continue to blindly accept that our system, flawed as it is, is the only alternative.

It is perhaps ironic that we debate this bill today. It is a bill that I filed back in the spring of 1989. Today, there is literally no movement of grain because of the adverse conditions of increasing world supplies and that debilitating, cut-throat foreign export subsidy war we referred to earlier.

As we speak, most of the storage in the country's elevators and terminals is full and no major sales appear imminent. It is a very difficult time for grain and oilseed producers. They need some interim help pending the introduction and establishment of grain and oilseeds safety net programs, the Guaranteed Revenue Insurance Plan and the National Income Stabilization Account. These are programs which are being developed by the grain safety net committee under the auspices of the "growing together strategy" put forward by the Minister of Agriculture last fall.

These conditions make it doubly important that we resolve this problem of shutdowns in the flow of grain, because when the market improves—and sometime in the future it will—and the Canadian Wheat Board makes some major sales and our grain handling system is being pressed to the limit in order to move that grain and maintain Canada's reputation as a trustworthy, reliable supplier of high quality product, at that time the same old anachronistic weapons are going to be trotted out. It is going to be the prairie farmer who again pays the bill.

I circulated the bill among a number of prairie farm organizations for their comments and it is interesting to note some of them.

The United Grain Growers, with some 73,000 members, in fact, call for the Government of Canada to make Canada's grain handling system an essential service.

### *Private Members' Business*

They also ask the government to implement a system of binding arbitration with no strikes or lock-outs.

The Alberta Women in Support of Agriculture state:

Insuring the shipment of grain to our export customers is very important to the grain industry and to the country as a whole. We cannot afford to lose customers or potential customers because our shipping system is not reliable.

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers represent some 11,000 wheat growers and they wish to endorse the passage of this bill as it stands. They state:

Our industry is critically dependent upon the services provided by grain handlers and railways. Whenever there is a work stoppage, and there have been many in the past, we face the prospect of lost sales and a damaged reputation as suppliers.

The Keystone Agricultural Producers of Manitoba at recent annual meetings have adopted resolutions calling for the handling of transportation of grain to be declared an essential service.

A number of farm organizations are supportive of the idea behind this bill. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, it appears, is not. I had a letter from the President of that organization, Mr. Stevenson, who stated, and I quote:

—you will note that we continue to use a system of labour relations that places the responsibility for achieving collective agreements squarely where it belongs—on the parties who are directly affected by its terms and conditions.

He goes on to say, and I quote:

As a farmer, I do not want to see the flow of grain stopped; but as the President of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool I want to ensure that we are able to achieve the goals we set relative to the collective bargaining process. For these reasons, among others, I do not believe that legislation such as you are proposing is appropriate.

I hasten to add that I do not expect this particular piece of legislation to be approved, not at all. It is simply a device to get the subject matter in front of the House in the hope that it may, in fact, be referred to the appropriate committee for some study. Perhaps, in the world today, we are capable of finding a better way to ensure the much needed movement of grain without having to put up with the agony and the costs of these various work stoppages, regardless of whose fault they may be.

I certainly agree with the wheat pool when it states that the responsibility lies with the parties who are bargaining. I wonder what happens when those parties fail to live up to their responsibilities, whether it is one or the other or both. Again, it is the innocent third party, the grain producers of western Canada and ultimately