

Western Grain Transportation Act

There are a number of people here who are not only Members of Parliament but farmers as well. A number of them have diversified in this manner because they are progressive farmers. Since they know they must meet the financial needs of their farming operations, they cannot only be restricted to one agency. I commend this amendment to them and to Government Members. I have not yet heard whether the Government supports the amendment and I hope someone from the Government will rise in his or her place to say that they support not only this amendment, but the Canadian Wheat Board, the Administrator and the need for extra potential and development on the Prairies. If that were to take place and that spirit was shown, I am sure they would agree with this amendment and we could see its passage before this debate ends.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words in support of Motion No. 39. I become a little tired of some of the things I hear from the NDP. Those Members are forever arguing against multinational and large corporations. They say that there is nothing good about them. However, when it comes to one of the largest corporations in the country, everything about it is perfect. I do not believe that a government monopoly is any better than a private monopoly. While there is a place for government monopoly, we have seen how a monopoly such as the post office has operated. It has come to the point where the post office does not want anyone to compete with it, including the couriers. The post office is now entering the courier business itself. So while there is a place for government corporations, they too can become large and bureaucratic just like any other corporation.

While I support the Canadian Wheat Board, I do not appreciate some of the things it has done. It has not always worked on behalf of the producers and in fact has prosecuted producers. I support it but I do not think that everything it does is right. I believe its actions should be scrutinized carefully to ensure that it will not become a bureaucratic, giant monopoly that will ride over the farmers just like any other corporation.

I have an example of this happening. I hope this is the last time it will happen with the Wheat Board. There was such a large bumper crop in Alberta in 1978 that there was no room in the granaries for the grain and the trains could not handle the shipments. The trains finally moved some grain to make room in the granaries. But the Wheat Board said you cannot use those granaries; you cannot put the wheat in the granaries because that would be overstorage. There was a bumper crop in the area and storage was short; much of it was vital grains. What did the local farmers do? They went to the Alberta Wheat Pool elevator agent. They said: "You have a lot of room in your elevator; how about taking our grain?" He replied: "That seems sensible; we can store it and you can pay a monthly charge for the privilege". However, the Canadian Wheat Board said that any grain in the elevator over and above the quota is an overage, which means any grain in the elevator above the quota.

● (1115)

The elevator had lots of room, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Wheat Pool was prepared to take it and the farmer was prepared to pay the charge. What was the alternative? The only other thing farmers could do was to dump their wheat on the ground, which meant a complete waste of up to 10 per cent. The farmers bought the storage tickets. The tickets were issued, they paid the charge, and the farmers put their wheat in storage. But the Wheat Board came along and said: "That is an overage; you do not have quota". It would be better if the wheat were stored outside and 10 per cent of it was wasted.

Mr. Bloomfield: Shame!

Mr. Taylor: That is what the Wheat Board said. The farmers said that is not sensible. The elevator agent said it is not sensible. The farmers paid for the storage. They weighed all the grains in the elevator. But what did the Wheat Board do? It started proceedings against the producers.

Mr. Bloomfield: Shame!

Mr. Taylor: The Hon. Member talked about a giant monopoly. The Wheat Board in this case acted just as bad as or worse than any giant oil company acts. The Wheat Board charged these farmers. The Alberta Wheat Pool supervisor verbally told the agent that he was at liberty to issue grain cheques for the grain because the offence had already been committed. Over 70,000 bushels of barley was not paid for. What did the Wheat Board do? The Wheat Board sent the RCMP to confiscate those tickets issued for the storage of barley in the elevator. That barley belonged to the farmers, to those producers.

Some Hon. Members: Right on!

Mr. Taylor: Even if the action were correct, the barley still belonged to the producers and they should have been paid for it. But it took the Wheat Board months before it let the farmers get their pay for the barley. In the meantime the Wheat Board forced the farmers into a court case. Many farmers cannot stand that kind of expense. They are producers. They are grain growers. The farmers had to hire lawyers. Some gave in and said: "We will simply plead guilty and pay the fine". One farmer said: "Not on your life. I am not going to give in. I am right. I am not going to destroy my wheat." The Wheat Board came into existence for orderly marketing on behalf of the producers.

An Hon. Member: Tell the whole story.

Mr. Taylor: The NDP is shouting at me. Its Members do not want the producer looked after. They want the corporation looked after.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: I am talking for the producer. Whether that giant corporation is a Wheat Pool or Imperial Oil, I am going