

Western Grain Transportation Act

did happen, Mr. Speaker? The fact is that when the GTA was set up, it was the best thing that ever happened because it prevented the Canadian Wheat Board from getting involved in all of the little dog fights that occurred with respect to the allocation between Board and non-Board grains. As a matter of fact, if anything, Mr. Speaker, it enhanced the integrity of the Canadian Wheat Board. Members of the Canadian Wheat Board will say that privately and publicly.

This kind of a transportation agency must be a neutral body. It must act as sort of a referee bringing all parties together and ensuring that when there is a breakdown, the onus or blame is laid upon the right party. At the very least, that cuts out the finger-pointing and it gets people talking and working together rather than fighting through the issuance of statements in the press.

The role of the Administrator must be clear. He must have a clear mandate and he should have adequate resources to do the job. The Agency must be responsive to the needs of the grain handling and transportation industry and it must have accountability to that industry. There is no question about that. It must be equipped to deal effectively with the grain producers' concerns in order to ensure that the transportation system serves the interests of the producers effectively. It must also have the necessary stature to deal with the transportation system on an equal footing with all other participants. These are the kinds of things that are required. That is why, when we reviewed the development of this particular concept in the form of this legislation, it became quite clear that the agricultural organizations in western Canada felt that the concept of the grain transportation co-ordinator or, as it is now called, the GTA, was working well. There was broad agreement between all organizations in western Canada.

Members of the Canadian Wheat Board itself, in their presentation to the committee on August 18, 1983, said that the current system with the GTA making the initial splits in car allocations has not become too cumbersome, and they went on to say that it is working well. Hon. Members of the NDP say that there is no one in western Canada who supports the concept of the Grain Transportation Agency Administrator. Well, I shall read from page 14 of the brief presented by the pools:

The Pools accept the formal establishment of a Grain Transportation Agency Administrator with co-ordinating functions and powers.

There it is. That group speaks for a hundred and some thousand farmers. The United Grain Growers speaks for some 90,000 farmers. They all support the concept of the grain transportation agency co-ordinator. What are Hon. Members of the NDP harping about, Mr. Speaker? They are again simply trying to spread fear, innuendo and hysteria.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that when we as a Government set up the concept of the grain transportation co-ordinator, or Administrator as the position is now called, it was never our intention to undermine the integrity, the role or the power of the Canadian Wheat Board. That has not happened to date and, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, it will not happen in the future. In order to ensure that it does not happen in the future,

we have proposed this motion which will ensure that it does not happen so that there can be absolutely no doubt and no question about our intentions. There should be absolutely no question and no doubt as to where we stand and where the producers stand in so far as the Canadian Wheat Board is concerned. Let that be fundamentally clear. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I hope that in spite of the flim-flammy which we have heard from it, the New Democratic Party will join forces with the Conservative Party to support the integrity and the authority of the Canadian Wheat Board. We welcome its support.

● (1650)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Hon. Member for Saskatoon East.

Hon. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon West): West. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you are sitting in your chair wondering—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Saskatoon West, of course.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Saskatoon West. East is east and west is west. I am from the West.

You may be asking yourself the question, Mr. Speaker, what is the essence of this debate in terms of this amendment and, indeed, almost every other amendment which has been brought forward, in terms of this legislation? It is extremely important legislation as far as all Canadians are concerned, but is of particular concern and interest to us in western Canada. I know you will be bemused, Mr. Speaker, over the fact that the debate is taking place on this side of the House. There are differences of opinion which are being expressed between the New democratic Party and the Conservative Party, and sometimes we agree. However, it is really distressing, when we have an important statement of principle put forward by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), that this legislation shall not in any way have a negative impact upon the operations of the Wheat Board, having as it does such influence on western Canada, that Government benches are absolutely mute. Not a word is being said by those Hon. Members. They have no interest in this legislation. Any time anyone gets up and addresses this issue with respect to western Canada, the Government benches are absolutely quiet. Those Hon. Members sit there and watch. They listen. They attempt to suggest that if we speak on behalf of our constituents in western Canada about the importance of the Wheat Board, that somehow—to put it in the words of an Hon. Member on the Government benches—we are filibustering. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, and the Hon. Member for Sarnia-Lambton (Mr. Cullen), that they will have precious little comfort when the people of western Canada discover the arrogant way in which the Liberals address this important legislation. That Party has not a thing to say. Where does it stand in connection with the Wheat Board? What is its position? I may disagree entirely with the New Democratic Party but I know where it stands—at least I know where it stands today.