

Private Members' Business

This bill goes back to the spring of 1989 when the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds unilaterally announced that he was taking the marketing of oats from under the arm of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is interesting that this government which used to talk a great deal about consulting with Canadians did precious little if any consultation with Canadian farmers in western Canada when he took this action.

It seems that he consulted with the Canadian wheat growers, the barley growers, the canola growers, the hog and beef producers, but for some reason or other he did not take any time to consult with oat growers. If he had consulted with some of the big farm organizations like the Canadian Federation of Agriculture or the Prairie Pools Incorporated, which have something like 130 farm members, he would have found out that the farmers did not want oats removed from the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw is proposing to put this back under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is very interesting that hon. members who spoke this afternoon from the government side suggested that somehow the hon. member was not making the presentation in a very fair way.

• (1440)

The Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee had its district meeting in the spring of 1989. The hon. member for Wetaskiwin who spoke this afternoon was saying that this was a great thing. If the hon. member for Wetaskiwin had taken time to attend that meeting in the spring of 1989, he would have found that 82 farmers showed up at the Wetaskiwin meeting—I assume he did not himself—and that a motion was put to reinstate oats under the Canadian Wheat Board and it passed 53 to 8. If he attended that same meeting in his own home town, he would have known that a motion was passed to remove the Minister of State for Grains and Oilseeds. They called on the Prime Minister to take that action and that was passed, likewise, by a vote of 36 to 21.

The hon. member for Crowfoot would know, if he had taken the time to analyse the Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee meetings, that similar meetings calling not only for the reinstatement of oats to the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board, and in many

cases calling for the removal of the minister responsible for grains and oilseeds were held in Stettler, in Westlock, in La Crete, in Spirit River, and in Valleyview. Then he would not be opposing this motion which is before the House today.

If we look at what has happened to oat prices since the minister's announcement, we could hardly get a more dramatic telling of a tale. I believe the announcement came some time in January 1989, and the top price for oats at that time was \$156 a tonne. Today, in October 1990, only some 18 months later, that price has dropped to \$109 a tonne. We can see that removing oats from the Wheat Board may have done something for those producers that the minister consulted with, most of them not oat producers but barley producers, wheat producers, canola producers and others that he claims to have consulted with, and perhaps some of the livestock groups. It really has not done much for securing new niche markets or ensuring the stability of the industry. In fact it has gone down very dramatically.

What we face today is a government that is determined, through free trade and through supporting and assisting large grain marketing agencies, to try to break orderly marketing in this country. Unfortunately, it is doing too good a job in my opinion. Removing oats is the first step. Barley will likely be next. Ultimately, if it was around long enough which I do not believe it will be, it would eventually disband the Canadian Wheat Board.

Clearly, if we meet privately with the representatives of the Saskatchewan Pool, the Alberta Pool or Manitoba Pool, they will tell us that as the borders are opened up under that free trade deal the power and the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board is going to be severely tested.

I believe that two things happened in the spring of 1989. It is hard to tell which one was the most harmful but removing oats from the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board was very harmful. Equally harmful was the budget of the great and powerful Michael Wilson because in that budget, in the spring of 1989, he removed one-half billion dollars of support to Canadian agriculture, everything from dairy support programs, to crop insurance, to prairie agriculture rehabilitation of branch lines, to the advance payment program, to the at and east program, to a whole broad range.