

the Government is doing this without a great deal of representation and support from western groups.

Mr. Malone: No support.

Mr. Waddell: No support as far as I can see. As the Hon. Member for Saskatoon East (Mr. Ogle), who knows the Prairies much better than do I and much better than do a lot of Government Members, so eloquently put it, Motion No. 55 is simply a motion that would see that control of these cars and the movement of the cars remain with the Canadian Wheat Board so that cars can be in the right place at the right time for the movement of that grain. I think this amendment makes sense and I invite the Government to adopt it.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to enter into the debate on the motions that are now before us. These are motions which were introduced by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin), Motions Nos. 55 and 56. The essential intent of these amendments is to preserve the position of the Canadian Wheat Board. As we stated earlier, many provisions in Bill C-155 attack the main tenets of western Canadian agriculture. We believe that it is an attack on the statutory Crow rate, obviously, and an attack on the Wheat Pools as well as the Canadian Wheat Board.

• (2350)

We have previously argued that the role of the Administrator and the Senior Grain Advisory Committee should not infringe on the job which the Wheat Board has been doing so well. The role of the Canadian Wheat Board has evolved from a lot of thought and consideration and experience which has gone into it. This bill, and particularly Clause 33, represents a further erosion of the powers and responsibility of the Canadian Wheat Board. That responsibility which is being transferred to the Senior Administrator is in essence under the control of the Minister and his Department.

I have stood here and pointed out on other occasions that the Department of Transport does not have a marvelous record and has made some major blunders in the past. I have cited such recent examples as the airports at Mirabel and Pickering as being major billion dollar estates made by the people in the Department of Transport.

We in Saskatchewan feel very unsure about giving more power to the Department of Transport over our lives in Saskatchewan. We simply do not trust the Department and certainly do not see any need for the functions of the Wheat Board to be transferred to the Administrator and, in essence, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Axworthy).

The Wheat Board has done a tremendous job in serving western agriculture. It does this job without much money from the public purse. The Wheat Board exists entirely on what the producers pay into it. This means that when the Wheat Board sends a delegation to China, for instance, to negotiate a new grain agreement, they are not being paid by the Canadian taxpayer but by the farmers of western Canada. The Canadian

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Wheat Board has done extremely well selling grain and moving it without a cost to the Canadian taxpayer, yet this clause of the Bill shows that the Government is adamant about interfering in an area in which it has no competency at all.

I am somewhat surprised by the lack of position which some of my Conservative friends have taken today. That lack of position is quite different from the position they took in the committee. In fact, when I read the committee records, I discovered that what they said on that occasion is quite different from what they have been saying in the House. To be sure, they have not said very much about this particular amendment. After reading the minutes of the committee I was struck by the fact that the Conservatives were quite surprised that those hopper cars which were bought by the producers were not in fact owned by them but by the Canadian Government.

Let me quote as follows from the minutes of the committee hearing held on September 13, 1983, at page 132 : 58:

MR. MCKNIGHT: Mr. Chairman, is the assumption of about 150,000 grain producers in western Canada, that they own the cars because they paid for them, in fact a fallacy? Is that what you are saying?

MR. D. LEFEBVRE: To the best of our knowledge, that is right.

MR. MCKNIGHT: I think there are going to be a lot of people terribly disturbed about what you have just said, Mr. Lefebvre. I happen to be one of them, because I helped pay for them. So did Mr. Gustafson; so did Mr. Mayer; so did Mr. Althouse.

Later on Mr. Mayer says:

I guess, Mr. Chairman, that totally makes us a socialist country. Everything the Government has is its. I mean, everything we have is the Government's, and by the grace of the Government us poor peasants are allowed to keep whatever we can keep.

First, the Conservatives in this committee were very surprised to learn that the producers in fact did not own these cars that they had paid for. Second, they were quite outraged at this. In fact, the last quote I will read into the record is of the Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) who said:

MR. MAZANKOWSKI: Mr. Chairman, I would like to support this amendment.

That was the amendment introduced by my colleague from Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) that would have prevented the Government from taking over those cars which the producer had bought. He went on to say:

I just wonder what would have to occur since the cars are now owned by the Government of Canada. You would have to do some title switching here to ensure that they were not transferrable. Could you, Mr. Kroeger, or Mr. Lefebvre outline what steps would have to be taken to achieve the spirit of Mr. Benjamin's amendment?

MR. D. LEFEBVRE: I think the words he is suggesting, except those 2,000 or the railway cars purchased with that money, would keep it with the Wheat Board—

In other words, the Hon. Member for Pontiac-Gatineau-Labelle (Mr. Lefebvre) was saying that the amendment of the Member for Regina West would keep those cars in the control of the Wheat Board. Therefore, they would be in the control of the producers themselves.

That was the position taken by the Conservatives in the committee. I wonder what has happened since then? We have seen a lot of switches by our friends on the right.