

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 18, 1983

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The House resumed from Monday, October 17, 1983 consideration of Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Transport; and Motions Nos. 39 (Mr. Gustafson) and 40 (Mr. Benjamin).

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, when we adjourned last evening at six o'clock, I still had a few minutes left and I would like to put some additional comments on Motion No. 39 and No. 40, specifically Motion No. 39, on the record of the House today.

A number of us who have been involved in this debate for some period of time have some concern this morning as to what actions the Government might take today in parliamentary procedure form in terms of this debate. Our spokesman on this debate, the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), and a number of my colleagues who participated in the committee, in the earlier debate and in the debate at report stage, have always been concerned, because of the major impact this Bill has on the western economy and, therefore, on the Canadian economy, that these motions be debated fully, and not only that they be debated fully, but that the public understand the reason for the very full debate.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have followed the lead of the Hon. Member for Vegreville: we express our points of view and have endeavoured to utilize the parliamentary time as best we could in order to do just that, not only for the western Canadian farmer but for the Canadian economy. One cannot separate the Canadian farmer and the Canadian grain producers as separate entities from the rest of the economy. For that reason we are entering into this debate this morning with some concern that the Government will take steps today which will jeopardize the positive debate which we have been attempting to carry on in the House of Commons.

Motion No. 39 is a motion which will not only protect the function of the Canadian Wheat Board, but also will allow the Administrator to carry out his or her functions. It seems to be

a given in this House, Mr. Speaker, that anyone in this House who comes from the Prairies automatically must, and does, pay his allegiance to the Canadian Wheat Board. Throughout the years I have been here listening to various speeches on this subject, it appears to be almost as if one tries to outdo the other in terms of their loyalty to the Canadian Wheat Board. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that point has not escaped you as well, although you do not come from the Prairies.

There is no question that Canadian wheat farmers support the Canadian Wheat Board. They do not want it dismantled. They do not want to see its powers reduced. The farmers want to maintain orderly marketing. They want the Canadian Wheat Board to maintain its ability to get into international markets and to sell grain. That is not our argument. That is not the narrow argument which the New Democratic Party should restrict itself to on this motion; it should look at the issue more broadly. There are other areas of sales potential which possibly the Canadian Wheat Board might not be able to tap or might not have the same contacts with as other agencies. That is the point. We want to utilize every opportunity available not only for the sale of western grain, but to receive the optimum price for the Canadian producer.

I believe this motion, Mr. Speaker, could help in this objective. That is the point we are trying to make in this motion, which stands in the name of Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson), and the principle which we are putting forward is quite clear. The Canadian Wheat Board should not only continue its function as it has before; we hope it will have even greater success than it had in the last crop year and that its powers will not be diminished, while realizing at the same time that there are other realities on the Prairies which can be utilized by farmers and the Administrator. We have seen various examples in areas which can only grow feed grains or course grains where farmers have taken risks in the last number of years with high-risk crops.

● (1110)

Why have they done this? It was not only for diversification but because of cash flow. Therefore if everything was under the control of the Canadian Wheat Board, all farmers would be tied into the quota system or block system. In fact, I suggest it would reduce some of the opportunities that farmers and others have opened for themselves on the Prairies. Therefore, I hope that when the NDP study this motion they will not only see that the Canadian Wheat Board will be protected in all its functions and that those functions would in fact be enhanced, but that there are opportunities which could be taken advantage of as well.