

Western Grain Transportation Act

important part in the history of western Canada and will continue to do so.

It is therefore most important that the amendment in Motion No. 39 be supported, because it indicates that the Wheat Board's authority will not in any way be impaired by the role of the Administrator. It is at that point I wish to make at this time and it is with those remarks that I conclude.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Is the House ready for the question?

The Hon. Member for Wetaskiwin.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion moved of the Hon. Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Gustafson). The words of this motion are very important. I recall that when we were in Government we set up the office of co-ordinator. I was one of the members of the task force who set up the rules and regulations by which that co-ordinator should act. It was never the intention at that time or at this time that the co-ordinator—or the Administrator as the position is now called—would in any way inhibit the Canadian Wheat Board's powers. It was felt there was a need at that time for a person or an organization in place that would assist the Canadian Wheat Board in allocating powers.

We have a very complicated system that has developed in the delivery of grain in the West. We have the Wheat Board grains and we have off-Board grains. Some of the latter are delivered to agents of the Wheat Board and sold under its auspices. Others, such as oilseeds, are sold by farmers directly through producer cars or sold through agents of the Wheat Boards, the pools, the UGG and Pioneer to be delivered to ports by those agencies.

It seemed to us at that time that the Canadian Wheat Board would find itself in a dilemma as to whom to allocate cars. For example, if it had just sold a large quantity of grain to a customer and ships were arriving, would it allocate cars for that type of grain and at the same time jeopardize a much needed feeding requirement, say, in eastern Canada or B.C.? How would it make its decision at cross purposes with itself?

We felt at that time it would be in order to create a body or a person which we called a co-ordinator, now called the GTA, who would take into account all these various problems and make a decision as to which elevator, which line, would get the cars that were required.

A problem has also developed in certain areas. Perhaps the cars have been allocated on past experience of that line. For example, if the Alberta Wheat Pool on a specific branch line has been receiving so many cars per week over the last year, then it would be very easy to give them the same number of cars per week in the coming year. Perhaps a farm co-operative or another elevator company, a private company, has built an elevator on that line and farmers, concluding that that facility can provide better service to them, decided to make deliveries to the new elevator instead of the one on the line as in the past. This has been the problem in the past because one company is receiving cars based on tradition on that line and another

company which is new is not getting sufficient cars to meet the demand coming on that line.

It is very difficult, then, if we do not have a body set up that is in tune with the allocation of cars day by day, to get some redress to this problem. I remember very well the people at Weyburn, Saskatchewan, who built a high through-put elevator with the ability to provide cleaning services and had the spot of 25 cars capability on that line, and yet they were simply not receiving the cars requested to move the farmers' product. In fact, elevators that had been on the line in previous years were getting more cars in place than they had grain delivered to them. This was not fair to the elevator company. We felt that by putting the grain transport co-ordinator in place that that situation could be rectified.

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We set in place a number of very important objectives which had to be followed. The first objective was that the authority had to be neutral. It could not in any way favour one company over another, one agency over another, or offboard over onboard delivery. This was very important, otherwise the agency would lose its credibility. We insisted that it had to be neutral.

Also it was very important that the co-ordinator had a set of rules by which that body had to live. This became difficult without legislation. Over time the role of that agency was more and more defined. As well, it was felt that the agency had to be responsive to the needs of producers. I just gave the example of the Weyburn terminal. I could prove in many situations that even today cars are not being allocated according to the deliveries of farmers to individual elevators. Some elevators are getting more cars than they should be getting based upon deliveries, other elevators are plugged. We have some way to go in making the agency responsive.

The agency needed to be equipped with some authority to do as it felt best for producers. This goes to the whole question of what tools it has, whether in fact it can impose penalties if its orders are not delivered by railway companies or agents of the Canadian Wheat Board. This area has to be dealt with to a great extent.

If we look back on what the agency was set up to do and how it has functioned very well on the Prairies in allocating cars and in the transportation of grain either for export or for domestic consumption, we will find very few individuals, companies or groups of people in western Canada who have had anything but praise for the agency. This amendment attempts to say that the Administrator has certain powers. These powers are being granted to him under the Act. There should be no question of an underlying current which takes away any of the legitimate powers of the Canadian Wheat Board. Its duty has always been to producers, to maximize their sales in international markets. It should continue to perform that duty, and the majority of farmers agree.

No one is questioning that the system can be improved. That is always at the backs of the minds of the representatives of western Canadian farmers and of Members of Parliament who