

*Private Members' Business*

I put it into very basic terms as we look at whose ox is being gored. We do not want to turn grain handlers against farmers. We do not want to turn farmers against grain handlers. We want people to be given the opportunity to use a system that in fact works.

If we look at the Canadian Autoworkers' recent strike against Ford, they used the system and in a very short time were back at work. I emphasize once again that the system works.

The hon. member says that the farmers would love to hear that. Farmers want more money, and I think that we should be looking at the over-all picture of what this government has done for farmers. Let us make farming more viable. Let us not try to turn one group against the other. Let us get them all working together so that at the end of the day farmers can make an adequate living and the grain gets transported by people who have used the collective agreement system to get that grain across.

We cannot attack a system that has been so hard fought for and hard worked for. I suggest that this bill was found wanting by the privileges and elections committee with good reason. I would not support the bill.

**Mr. Brian White (Dauphin—Swan River):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to second the motion of my colleague from Swift Current—Maple Creek—Assiniboia and to spend a few minutes speaking in favour of Bill C-250.

The purpose of this bill is to outlaw strikes and lockouts in the grain handling and transportation industries. It is unfortunate that the member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon had not listened to what my colleague said in his remarks concerning him not being hard and fast about the particular wording of the bill being what he wanted or needed. He would be perfectly willing to have the subject matter go to a committee of the House and find that better way that he spoke of.

• (1740)

In my riding of Dauphin—Swan River in western Manitoba we have roughly 25,000 miles of farmland. We probably have some of the best oilseed growing land in the country. Coarse grains, pulse crops, are grown in my part of the province. Strikes and lockouts in the grain handling system are very serious not only for the primary producers in my riding but for all of my constituents,

because in one way or another they all depend on agriculture. It is the number one industry by far so everyone depends on farmers and farming.

As I said, strikes or lockouts in the system are very serious. It is like traffic on a freeway. As long as things are moving smoothly, nobody notices how quickly things are moving. As soon as you have a bottleneck on a freeway, things back up pretty quickly. That is what happens in the grain handling system. It works well. Every piece, every cog in the system is very important: the grain handlers, the grain companies, the railway workers, the producers. They are all very important, but if one of those cogs breaks down the whole system backs up very quickly.

Since I have been a member of this House for a little more than six years, there have been three occasions I can think of where there has been work stoppages in the grain handling system. In each case when the New Democratic Party had to stand up and choose between organized labour and the farmers, it picked organized labour every time.

It has happened many other times in the past, but there are three times that I have personally stood and supported the producers in western Canada and I have seen the NDP across the way stand up and do exactly the opposite. I think it is important that the farmers in Canada know that because, as my colleague said, one thing is said to the farmers on the weekend, they come here, and the other hat goes on pretty quickly.

We are talking about a major industry in Canada. Grains and oilseeds in Canada account for \$5.7 billion in exports every year. That is big business. Bill C-250 brought forward by my colleague from Saskatchewan is being brought forward on behalf of grain producers, but as I mentioned it is important that the interests of every cog, every person involved in the grain handling system, be taken into account.

The conflict resolution process, as it exists today, is very tedious and very time consuming. I cannot believe what I just heard from the previous speaker, the member from British Columbia, who said the system works. If I went back to western Canada and stood before a group of farmers and said that to them, I would be strung up in pretty short order because the system does not work. It works fine as long there are no work stoppages, but if you told a farmer in Canada that the system was working when there was a work stoppage, look out. As my