

*Canadian Wheat Board Act (No. 2)*

crats. I do not necessarily want to see all Liberals eliminated from Saskatchewan.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain):** I do not even want to see the NDP eliminated. However, if ever they want to commit suicide, this is the way to do it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Ross Milne (Peel-Dufferin-Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, I will take just a very few minutes of the time of the House to speak to some points that have been raised on the other side about members from non-wheat growing areas on the committee not knowing what they are doing. I take some exception to that. I think other members from eastern Canada do, as well.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Milne:** Members from all parties on this committee were concerned enough to agree that the committee should travel to western Canada in order to have a better insight into the wheat and grain growing problems of this country. I think that all members share the view that, when they came here, the committee process was one of the most important things. They take their responsibilities seriously and do not automatically vote amendments pro or con as might be indicated. We have our own caucus meetings on this. We have discussions, good arguments and come to some agreement as to the best disposition. We follow that principle.

I take some exception to members opposite saying we do not take our responsibilities seriously and, just because we do not come from a wheat-growing area, we do not have any right to sit on the Standing Committee on Agriculture and discuss wheat matters. That is a wrong impression and it is one that members opposite might want to take off the record.

**Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the discussion on the proposed amendment to Bill C-88. We have had an interesting and worth-while discussion on the idea proposed by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) and the arguments on both sides of this particular issue. Although I do not agree with the substance of the amendment proposed in the House this morning, I want to thank the hon. member for presenting this idea to the House for consideration.

We have had a rather interesting and useful analysis of the issues that are involved here in what may appear, on the surface, to be a very simple, straightforward and thoroughly desirable change. However, that is not entirely without complication. It is important to bear in mind what those complications and considerations could be. As the minister indicated during the committee hearings on Bill C-88, there are arguments pro and con on the substance of this amendment. On the one hand, as many members have pointed out, it is fundamentally important that this advisory committee should have the choice and be representative of prairie grain producers. There is no disagreement on that point. That is the reason why, a year or more ago, the minister initiated the experiment of seeing whether, in

fact, it would be desirable to devise an electoral procedure for the selection of the advisory committee members. That experiment was conducted last year and members were elected.

According to the legislation as it is written, the minister specifically appointed the successful candidates in that election to the advisory committee. Following that experiment of a year ago, the minister made the commitment that we would come back to the House of Commons to formalize that electoral procedure in legislation. That, of course, is what Bill C-88, among other things, is designed to do.

The point, clearly, is that there can be no disagreement on the fundamental issue about the desirability of this advisory committee being the choice of farmers and being representative of farmers. I do not believe anyone, on either side of the House, is arguing that point. The ultimate safeguard in this respect is to be found in the fact that the electoral process itself is squarely in the hands of producers. They are the ones who will exercise their franchise and will make the ultimate decision as to their choice of who should represent them on the advisory committee.

● (1210)

On the other side of the question, the argument in opposition to the amendment is based simply upon the desirability of maintaining flexibility and allowing producers a broad spectrum of possible candidates for election. As I say, the franchise rests with the producers. Bearing this in mind, should we, by legislation, restrict the opportunity of some to come forward? Should we limit the range of options? Ought we to restrict the class of persons eligible to sit on the advisory committee? For the time being, at least, my response would be "No." That is my view, at least until we have had further experience with this electoral process.

I remind hon. members that it is a very new one. It has been tried once and, of course, the next election a few years down the road it will be the first to be held under the terms of the legislation. Until we see some evidence that there is a problem which must be dealt with—and, surely, such evidence would have to indicate clearly that there was an impairment of the interests of producers because of the broad range of choice—the amendment ought not, in my opinion, to be accepted. Instead, I believe we should opt for flexibility and for maintaining a broad range of choice. Again, I emphasize that the choice will remain in the hands of producers. All we are talking about in the amendment is limiting the number of options. Surely it is advisable at the outset to make the choice as broad as possible. I have a great deal of personal confidence in the capacity of producers to make their decision in their own best interests. I do not believe they need the kind of artificial protection which is being proposed. Nevertheless, if safeguards are required in future, changes can be implemented either by statute or by regulation.

I should like to turn now to some of the remarks which were made in the House today having to do with what took place in the standing committee when this amendment was presented—the argument that government members of the committee that day happened to number 12 from regions outside the Canadian Wheat Board area, and that, somehow, the fact that they did not come from constituencies in

[Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain).]