

absolute formality of a written notice. On the other hand, the Hon. Member for Yukon has asked that that formality be observed. Accordingly, I will require notice in writing of the motion proposed by the Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to increase the productivity of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Blenkarn: You have done a good job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): What I now require from the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary is a notice in writing. Unless the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary stands to withdraw the motion—then I get into other procedural difficulties as well.

Mr. Flis: Mr. Speaker, since it is very clear that the Opposition is there just to filibuster, I withdraw my request.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Unfortunately, it is not a request, it is a motion. I do not have it either.

I might be inclined to suggest that to withdraw the motion unanimous consent is required, but since I never received the motion I do not think that I need unanimous consent to ask that it be withdrawn. May we continue in debate.

Mr. Lee Clark (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, you will forgive me if I, as a newcomer, confess that some of the proceedings in the last few moments have left me somewhat confused. I certainly would not expect Members to my left to be confused by events before the House.

I was working very diligently in my office while listening to the debate at the same time. I heard some comments from the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) with respect to the debate which has been taking place on this Bill in the last few months with respect to the Crow as well as on the history of the Canadian Wheat Board. I felt it was important to express my views on this issue, particularly bearing in mind that this issue was discussed to some degree during the recent byelection in Brandon-Souris last spring. At that time we had ample opportunity to discuss this very important issue before the electorate of western Canada. We also had an opportunity at that time to have the electorate of western Canada express their opinion on the issue before them. Some Members of this House were present at that byelection and participated in the campaign. One of the points I want to make very clear to you, Mr. Speaker, and to Members of the House is that the Progressive Conservative Party since the very beginning of that byelection, which takes us back to the early months of this year, expressed sincere and severe doubts about the legislation presented by the Government of the day, particularly with respect to the farmers' ability to pay for the transportation costs, which were hopefully to be improved by the legislation, and that share of the cost passed on to the farmer. During the course of that byelection there was considerable discussion in which I and other Members who campaigned on my behalf took part about the need to protect the farmer from being held accountable for an undue proportion of the transportation

Western Grain Transportation Act

costs. Even before the Government talked in terms of introducing an amendment, described as a safety net of some 10 per cent of the costs to be paid to the farmer, we were talking in that byelection about the need to protect the farmer and I was proposing a safety net of some 7 per cent. That figure of 7 per cent was selected because that has been the historic average which the farmer has paid in the last quarter century. Having considered the evidence presented to the committee during the course of the summer months, we on this side of the House have come to the conclusion that the farmer is unable at this time to pay the kind of money the Government is asking for. We have decided, and it seems very appropriately so, that any increase in farmers' costs must be delayed for a certain period of time and for the very minimum of three years.

● (1730)

I think it is very important for Members of the House and for the public at large to understand that the Progressive Conservative Party has been very consistent in questioning the ability of farmers to pay the amount of money which the Liberal Government was asking of them. We have been very concerned that this historic right, which has been viewed by the farmers of western Canada as a historic right, must not be destroyed in any haphazard manner. It is material that this House go on record as recognizing the question of the ability of the farmer to pay and recognize the concern we have expressed for several months. It is also important that the House and the public at large understand those of us who were involved in any way in the western Canadian grain industry and that we in the Progressive Conservative Party recognize the importance of the Wheat Board as an ongoing part of the marketing system that must be preserved.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Wheat Board was developed in Canada in a series of stages. It had its beginning during the period of World War I and then more recently, of course, in the depression of the 1930s. We in this Party are very proud of the part which the Government of the day, the R. B. Bennett Government, played in the development of the Canadian Wheat Board in the 1930s. At that time it was the central selling agency. Eventually, it became the Wheat Board as we know it. We have done everything we can throughout the years in which we have had some responsibility to preserve the importance of the Wheat Board and to guarantee that it will be an ongoing part of the western Canadian grain industry.

It would be fair to say that the activities of the Wheat Board and the powers of the Wheat Board were very much enhanced during the period of time in which the Hon. Member for Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain (Mr. Hamilton) had the responsibility for administering the agricultural concerns of western Canada. I think it is important this is recognized, and we reaffirm it over and over again because there are those in this House who would attempt to take the opportunity to confuse the electorate and to suggest that we, as a Party, would do something to weaken the Wheat Board. I wish to say unequivocally that I and other Members of this Party recognize the importance of the Wheat Board, and even though we recognize that there are some deficiencies, it has played a very