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**Chair**

**Mr. Paul Steckle**

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## Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food

Tuesday, December 7, 2004

•(1110)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.)):** Order, please.

We're in public. Is that what you want, Mr. Angus?

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Yes.

**The Chair:** Being in camera always leaves people in a bit of a quandary as to what that means, but we are in a public meeting as we now speak.

Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** This follows up on our last meeting, when we had the Canadian Wheat Board folks here. I just made a motion that the Wheat Board submit to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food all documents, including minutes of meetings, concerning grants and forgivable loans to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition.

There are a couple of reasons for that. One of them is that we were given two numbers. The Farmer Rail Car Coalition gave us a number that was entirely different from the number the Canadian Wheat Board has given us. I think, given the fact that this is testimony to a House of Commons committee, we have an obligation to find out which of those is accurate.

Secondly, the money that's gone towards this is actually coming out of farmers' pool accounts, and there may be some question as to whether the Wheat Board is even authorized to do that. I would like to know what the discussion was and what resolution was made in discussions on that subject.

**The Chair:** Is there any discussion?

Yes, Mr. Easter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** I am very strongly opposed, because what we have here, Mr. Chairman, is a case where the Standing Committee on Agriculture of the House of Commons is basically trying to pick and choose and to micromanage the affairs of the Wheat Board, which has an elected board of directors with ten producers on it. Why are we not doing the same thing in terms of the scholarships they offer and so on? Underlying this is a desire by the member opposite to make another attack on the Canadian Wheat Board because he personally disagrees with that philosophy.

In terms of the differences in the two figures, I would take it that probably one individual was talking about a one-year commitment, but I took the representatives of the Canadian Wheat Board at their word in what they had to say here.

Also keep in mind that the Canadian Wheat Board is audited by auditors. It produces a financial statement, and I would think those auditors and the auditing firms they represent have a lot of credibility.

So I'm certainly strongly opposed to this motion. Let the Canadian Wheat Board do its work.

In fact, in terms of the allocation to the FRCC, from my point of view this motion has nothing to do with the FRCC proposal, not a thing. If the FRCC proposal is on the table, then that's what we should be talking about. If the Canadian Wheat Board is on the table, then maybe this is what we should be talking about, but this motion has nothing to do with the FRCC proposal. It's just another attack.

**The Chair:** You probably have some people who will agree with you on that, but the motion is on the table and we have to discuss it.

I'll take one from this side. Mr. Angus.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I strongly oppose this motion. We're dealing with the motion on the FRCC, and it has nothing to do with the Wheat Board. It seems that about two months ago we sat in this committee and it looked to me like our Conservative members would have taken a bullet to protect the packers from having to reveal any information. Now suddenly they want the Wheat Board and its issues brought forward. I think this has nothing to do with the issue at hand.

**Mr. David Anderson:** A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Mr. Angus is entitled to make his comments.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Can we make a point of order on the inaccuracies of his statement?

**The Chair:** Yes, you can ask for that.

**Mr. David Anderson:** As a matter of fact, we went along with, supported, and basically initiated the motion to get the packers' books, so he's inaccurate in what he's saying.

**The Chair:** That matter has been dealt with.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Well, what I was saying is, we were very prescribed in what we asked of the packers. We would be seen—and I think it is very important for us not to be seen—as getting involved in the politics of the Wheat Board, especially when there's so much going on out there in western Canada right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now Mr. Kilgour.

**Hon. David Kilgour (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, Lib.):** I grew up in Winnipeg and I went to school with kids whose dads and moms worked for the Wheat Board. The Wheat Board has been a major institution in Winnipeg for a long time.

But I think it's taking it a bit over the top to suggest that somehow we're attacking the Wheat Board to ask to see their minutes on this matter, which was raised last week, so I will vote in favour of the motion.

**The Chair:** Is there anyone else? Does anyone from the Bloc want to speak to this motion? If not, we'll move on.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** If we are going to talk about a different phone number, I don't agree, but if it's about the coalition, I do agree.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** We've heard from all sides now.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Chair:** Yes?

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** This is on that same point, Mr. Chairman. Will we ask for that to be sent in a timely manner, or is this just an open-ended request, where the response may come in on the 12th of never? The motion didn't stipulate a date, but when we send a letter to the Wheat Board, will we say by such and such a date?

**The Chair:** Well, maybe the mover of the motion had a date in mind for reference. Do you want to put that on the table?

**Mr. David Anderson:** What's a reasonable date? I think within the next month would be reasonable, wouldn't it? I'll leave it to the chair, but we expect them to do it as soon as possible.

**The Chair:** Can we say we'll find a reasonable time that would meet with your expectations?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Absolutely.

**The Chair:** The letter will be sent by our clerk immediately.

We'll move on to the first matter of business. This has to do with....

Yes, Mr. Miller.

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** I just believe, Mr. Chairman, that we now have to go back into camera.

**The Chair:** Yes, we will, and you can make a motion to do that.

I'm sorry, is there something else?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** On the motion, Mr. Chair, I would assume, then, that the member in his motion is not asking for items in the

minutes that basically relate to marketing secrets as they relate to trade but that it is just specifically attached to the discussion and motions by the board on moneys allocated to the FRCC.

**The Chair:** Mr. Ritz.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** That's all the motion asks for, Mr. Chair. They could certainly write out anything else, the same as with the Gomery inquiry papers.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** What's funny is, don't ask Cargill for it.

**The Chair:** Mr. Anderson.

**Mr. David Anderson:** The motion is very clear on that, but Mr. Easter actually did bring up an interesting point, and if you wanted to pursue it, I'd be glad to. That is, we could expand it later to look at all the non-market-related activity the board is involved in, because he mentioned a couple of those.

**The Chair:** We've had a vote on the motion, the motion's been discussed by all parties, and I think we need to move on.

Mr. Angus, for the last point.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** I'm very concerned that we're asking to look at all the minutes of their meetings, because we have some people who would obviously want to look at everything in the Wheat Board and bring it out. If we're going to have this motion, we should insist on the same level we had from Cargill. These guys were so concerned that Cargill didn't have to show us anything except.... In fact, it was going to come in a brown paper bag with no names attached. I want the same issue here. I don't think we have a right to see minutes of their meetings. They're a corporation representing producers.

**The Chair:** We've had the motion, Mr. Angus. I'm sorry, we've dealt with that. In respect of the question that's been addressed in terms of confidentiality, if there are matters of confidence, we as a committee need to respect that confidentiality. I think there's enough sense around this table that we will do that.

Mr. Gaudet.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Chairman, aren't we suppose to get the motion 48 hours before?

**The Clerk of the Committee:**

I did sent it.

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Yes, we'll circulate it.

Let's move on. That's the end of that matter.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]







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