

Canadian Wheat Board Act

have to go to granaries and haul a one or two-bushel quota in the middle of winter instead of waiting until a satisfactory quota is obtained, making it worthwhile opening the granaries and going to the work and expense of hauling that grain.

● (4:40 p.m.)

At this stage in the debate I wish to say that I am in general agreement with the revision of the quota system and also protein grading, although I believe this locks the producer into a segment of his industry. I also believe, as I mentioned before, that this would make the Wheat Board more an arm of government rather than an agency for the producers as it should be. In dealing with this kind of legislation, I believe we must weigh the merits of what would happen to producers under these changes against the need to streamline our grain handling and grain exporting system.

Then, we come to the amendment which has been included in the past few weeks by the minister responsible for the Wheat Board to which I am totally opposed. I refer to the inclusion of flaxseed, rye and rapeseed under the Canadian Wheat Board. I believe the legislation provides for the extension of the Wheat Board marketing system in respect of flax, rye and rapeseed without the usual safeguards, including the benefit of public debate and decision making, especially by the producer segment of the agricultural industry which will be most directly affected.

In his opening remarks this afternoon, the minister mentioned he would not apply such legislation unless it should be needed. The minister may have very good intentions in this regard, but I suggest that another minister responsible for the Wheat Board or another government might feel differently, and since the legislation would be on the books it could be used at any particular time. If we are to consider such legislation, I believe some form of a producer plebiscite should be contemplated before the matter goes to the committee so that we might know whether or not the producers really want this form of legislation. If this were done afterward, it might be too late because possibly the damage would be done. The minister responsible for the Wheat Board has never really clarified his own position on the subject. I hope that sometime during this debate he will tell the Canadian people, the Canadian grain producers and rapeseed producers just where he stands on this subject. He said this is to be enabling legislation that would not necessarily be used. Then, he turned around and said to the rapeseed producers or rapeseed associations that the marketing of rapeseed is generally in good hands and that he sees no need for change. If this is the case, I would ask the minister why this provision was ever included in the legislation.

The main fault I find with the inclusion of rapeseed under the Canadian Wheat Board is the fact that rapeseed will not be marketed through the futures market by our grain exchanges. Mr. J. J. Danfield, the Executive Vice President of the Canadian Rapeseed Processors, who

[Mr. Murta.]

is also President of the Canadian Rapeseed Association, said:

It is absolutely imperative that the futures market trading be continued to permit our company to continue operations allowing processing and marketing of oil and meal products both for domestic consumption and export.

He also said that if rapeseed is included under the Canadian Wheat Board, they will have to cancel negotiations in respect of a 30,000 ton export of rapeseed meal. I believe the placing of rapeseed under the Canadian Wheat Board would mean the kiss of death for a crop which could be and has been very beneficial to western Canadian farmers. From my talks with various people in the Canadian rapeseed industry there would seem to be a strong feeling that the motive behind the minister's amendment is to try to recoup some of the heavy deficit incurred by the board in its operations in respect of the wheat, oats and barley pool. In other words, the rapeseed growers who have been selling at a profit would be charged with the losses in respect of other crops by being included in this legislation.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question.

Mr. Murta: Certainly.

Mr. Lang: I wonder whether the hon. member realizes that under the existing legislation the grains are kept separate so that his suggestion would not be applicable in any case.

Mr. Murta: Well, from talking to various people in the trade my understanding is that if this provision, were enacted there is a strong possibility that could be the result. On the other side of the coin is the fact that the importers of rapeseed, rapeseed oil and meal around the world repeatedly have warned that they would not be interested in Canadian rapeseed unless grain exchange facilities are available to enable them to hedge their purchases. I believe that if rapeseed were brought under the Canadian Wheat Board, this possibility would be denied to the importers in other countries. It is interesting to note that a leading British importer of oilseeds, and a leading authority on marketing, estimated that in the next ten years Canada could probably build an export market for 500 million bushels of rapeseed. That is as much rapeseed as the total amount of wheat we have exported this year. The potential of this crop is terrific. He also warned that this could be accomplished only under an open market with grain exchange facilities.

I believe that before the minister's amendment concerning rapeseed, flax and rye is passed he should explain to the rapeseed growers in Canada why he thinks the board would be better able to market their crop. With an open market, the grower can elect to sell his rapeseed crop for cash to an elevator company or to seed crushers without incurring storage charges or paying indirectly the interest charges that the Wheat Board would have to incur in buying his crop. He can also load a car of rapeseed, ship it to a terminal and sell it on track for the