

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**CANADA GRAIN BILL**

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION, PROVISIONS RESPECTING GRADING, LICENCES, ELEVATORS, ETC.

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Olson that Bill C-175, respecting grain, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, we in this party favour the reintroduction of Bill C-196 as it was known, or Bill C-175 as it is now known, at the level at which it was last dealt with by the House. Certainly, we do not think it is necessary to return it to committee. We feel the bill does some good and essential things. For example, we feel it provides for the protein grading of wheat so that importing nations and the markets of the world will be in a position to purchase Canadian grain on a guaranteed protein basis. This is a good thing. The bill also provides for mixing at terminals or, if you will, tailor-making samples of grain for export. This will have some advantages: one is that we will be able to mix grain to the order of the buyer.

We on this side of the House, and I think most farmers, have long argued that something more specific should be done in the directing of boxcars on the Prairies. This has been a complaint for as long as I have been farming, and certainly for some time before that. I think these three aspects of the bill should have been introduced at least ten years ago. I recall that when I was a wheat pool delegate in the 1950s, farmers, wheat pool delegates and farm organization people were talking about them then. I only wonder why it has taken so long to get them before Parliament and passed in this form.

The important issue to be remembered when dealing with this bill is the selling of grain. Getting markets for our grain has always been a problem for as long as I have been farming, and we must be alive to changes in the markets. Too often we have been complacent. We have accepted the fact that our wheat and other grains were the best in the world and expected buyers to come to us. This is no longer true. Now we are in a buyer's market and we must do something if we are to sell our grain in competition with other countries.

I would like to mention just a few items which illustrate what I mean. A new milling process is being used to turn wheat into flour. It is known as the Chorley process and it requires a specific protein level of wheat. Bread can be made with a lower level of protein, but there must be a certain consistency to that level so the miller will not encounter difficulties. As I say, this bill would allow us to sell grain on a guaranteed protein basis.

Canada Grain Bill

Another matter I wish to mention is that other countries have been experiencing problems in agriculture, particularly with respect to agricultural trade. Some of them have been introducing tariff changes which may work against us. I wish to quote from a news clipping headed "Canada's wheat problems with U.K. begin." It reads in part:

The British budget brought down last week signalled export problems for Canadian wheat much sooner than anyone here had expected.

The budget indicated that the British government plans to start protecting its farmers with tariff walls even before it joins the European Economic Community.

In effect this is going to start now.

Under the present British system, food is imported free, the government pays subsidies to the farmers, and consumers are given the benefit of lower prices.

Under the new scheme, subsidies will be gradually abandoned, and Britain will switch to a system of import levies.

That will make imported food more expensive and allow the British farmer to raise his prices.

The important question now is who will suffer most. Will the British consumer bear the whole cost of the tariff? Or will the Canadian exporter have to accept lower prices in order to maintain his sales to Britain?

It is the reference to the Canadian exporter that I am worried about, because we export grain. If we are not awake to the problem posed by Britain joining the European Common Market, we may completely lose our sales of wheat to Britain, which we cannot afford to do. We have a surplus of grain. Our country's economy depends upon selling this grain. Much of western Canada's welfare depends upon the export of wheat, and we do not want to lose any sales if we can possibly avoid it.

I would like to mention a different matter in connection with this bill. Last summer we held hearings for several weeks in connection with Bill C-196, the Canada Grain Act, and I was very unhappy at the attitude of the grain companies in presenting their briefs to us. I was particularly unhappy with the Canada Grains Council. I felt its members did not give the leadership in this area that they might have done. I speak both in sorrow and in anger. I am sorry they did not give leadership and I am angry because the Canadian taxpayer pays for the Canada Grains Council; he pays \$50,000 through the Department of Agriculture and another \$50,000 through the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. In my opinion, their reaction to the bill was a negative one. I feel we deserve better than that from the Canada Grains Council.

Had the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) expected this reaction, he might have had second thoughts about the people he appointed to the Canada Grains Council. We saw his creation, the Canada Grains Council, making a negative response to his bill. It makes me think of the man who has been bitten by a dog, and the worst part is that it was his own dog. The Canadian taxpayer deserves better than that. The Canada Grains Council has been very disappointing in so far as giving any leadership in this area is concerned. They have ignored the marketing needs of Canadian farmers and grain producers. Their