

Canadian Wheat Board Act

We have both the government and the official opposition being half-pregnant, and that is not easy. They say there should be a plebiscite on this question. The three prairie pools, the three prairie federations of agriculture through the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and the National Farmers Union have submitted briefs and resolutions to this government, and to the Tory government before it, asking that these three grains be brought under the Canadian Wheat Board marketing system. They have made this request for the last 25 years, yet both the government and the official opposition are still saying, "Well, let us be careful; let us not rush into this. After all, we have to have a plebiscite to figure out how the grain growers feel about it". They have been putting off the grain growers and giving them the run-around since both parties have tried to take credit for the Canadian Wheat Board Act in 1935. The only difference between these two parties is that when one of them is in, the other is out. Neither has introduced a measure in which the party believed in principle—

Mr. Horner: Would the hon. member permit a question at this point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member may put a question if the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) agrees to accept it.

Mr. Benjamin: I would appreciate that.

Mr. Horner: The hon. member has gone on at length about what may or may not have been the various positions of the government party and the official opposition, but could he clearly state the position of the NDP on rapeseed, flaxseed and rye being included within the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board?

Mr. Benjamin: I would be delighted to state the position of our party. I think it has been pretty well unequivocal, even though it may have cost us some seats. We have never strayed from the principle of an orderly, public marketing system for our grains. We have never strayed from the contention that parasites have been riding the backs of the grain growers, rapeseed, flaxseed and rye, exploiting the farmers of these three products to this day.

My colleague from Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) was too kind to the minister this afternoon, I think—he wasn't even mean to the official opposition—when he illustrated chapter and verse the kind of margin that exists in the grain trade as far as rapeseed is concerned. I hope either the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) or the minister will explain to the House the reason for a 36 cents margin on rapeseed. Who is getting this 36 cents, and what is it for? I hope the hon. member for Crowfoot and some of his colleagues will explain to the House the mysterious disappearance of rapeseed, with half of one cent going into the private grain trade. I am sure all the rapeseed growers in Alberta and Saskatchewan would like an explanation and would also like to know why there is a 36 cents margin per bushel of rapeseed.

Mr. Horner: Would you believe storage?

Mr. Benjamin: This mysterious disappearance is over and above storage. I have mentioned the three prairie pools, and there are Tories, Liberals and NDP'ers and a few others besides who are members of those three pools, as they are of the National Farmers Union, the federations of agriculture and the various branches. For 25 cotton-picking years they have been unanimous in their request for an orderly, public marketing system for all grains under the jurisdiction of the Wheat Board. Now the minister says he is going to have it both ways.

Mr. Horner: Which way are you going to have it?

Mr. Benjamin: Surely all grains should be under the Wheat Board or none of them should. This is what the minister faces and he knows it. He can drag this question out for another six or ten years, and if he is lucky the Tories will get into power and then they will be able to drag it out for another six or ten years and we will never get the question resolved. This is what has been happening since 1935 when you and I, Mr. Speaker, were just kids.

Mr. MacInnis: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Benjamin: I would love to.

Mr. MacInnis: Would the hon. member draw his remarks, which eliminated any possibility of the NDP ever forming the government, to the attention of his new leader tomorrow?

Mr. Benjamin: That is an assumption that my hon. friend has made. In spite of the fact that they do not grow a bushel of—

Mr. MacInnis: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Cape Breton-East Richmond (Mr. MacInnis) on a question of privilege.

Mr. MacInnis: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I inform the hon. member that I made no such assumption. All I did was put back on the record what the hon. member himself placed there when he called attention to the fact that only Liberals or Conservatives would form the government.

Mr. Benjamin: The hon. member has a good point there, and I did not make myself clear. I am glad he has drawn it to my attention and I will correct that statement right now. If and when all we are faced with is a Liberal or a Tory government, each will take turns every six or ten years holding plebiscites and trying to be on both sides of the question whether or not we will have a government-operated, producer-represented marketing board in control of the marketing of all grains.

This government has the organizational genius for having it both ways, and their position has been perpetuated by the official opposition. If the three pools to which I have referred, along with the federations of agriculture and the National Farmers Union—I admit there is some duplication of membership there—do not