

Canadian Wheat Board Act (No. 2)

about the undesirability of having votes on Friday, and it has been agreed that the vote will be called at a time to be decided after consultation among the House leaders.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Agreed.

Mr. Paproski: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that the vote will be taken at a later time after agreement between the House leaders?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is so ordered.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Like six months later.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT (NO. 2)**MEASURE TO PROVIDE FOR ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (for the Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-88, to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act (No. 2), be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Gordon Towers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, as I rise at third reading of this bill I point out that we intend to allow the bill to go through, but I do not think it should go through without making some comments.

The purpose of the legislation is to set up a committee to advise the Canadian Wheat Board, with which I agree, and there is a provision in the bill which stipulates what the advisory committee can do. There are also certain regulations established by the governor in council. One error in this bill is that it allows too much control to be retained by the governor in council and not enough control is given to the advisory committee.

After all, the advisory committee is made up of producers, and it is in their interest to be on the committee. I think it was brought forcibly to our attention in the standing committee that when members of parliament from the area served by the Canadian Wheat Board, that is, the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Peace River area of British Columbia, wished to bring in legislation, it was agreed to by the minister, but it was turned down by other hon. members not from that area. This raises the very fundamental point that it is dangerous to allow politics to become involved in the operation of a board such as the Canadian Wheat Board. We have seen that happen in the past. We have seen manipulation of pay-outs prior to the end of the year.

Mr. Goodale: Nonsense.

Mr. Towers: The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Goodale) says that is nonsense. He has not been around here very long. He does not remember that the Senate had to bring in a bill which curtailed the actions of the manipulators. If all control of the Canadian Wheat Board were given to the board and its advisers, there would be very little

[Mr. Sharp.]

reason for the governor in council to have that control. I would far rather have the chief commissioner of the Canadian Wheat Board or the chairman of the advisory committee stating what the initial payments are to be and what the final payments are to be. I think it would be better if they were doing it rather than the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

I feel that there is a misconception of what actually takes place within the operation of that board. I should stress that the Wheat Board pays its own way. It pays its own expenses, and I am sure that the consumers and taxpayers of Canada feel that the final or initial payments come out of the federal treasury, which is not the case. I am sure the hon. member for Assiniboia would agree with me that it comes out of the farmers' own money.

We must never underestimate the value of this income to the Canadian economy. The other day at report state I stressed that it gives great assistance to our economic well-being in counteracting our deficit balance of payments, which must never be overlooked, but also must not be taken for granted because inclement weather can have a great deal to do with the income of the prairie grain producer. Perhaps many Canadian taxpayers have to contend only with the Canadian government, but the western grain producer has to contend with the weather as well as the Canadian government. This has proven to be of fundamental importance. Reports coming out of central Europe and England indicate that that part of the world is undergoing a severe drought which is having a devastating impact on its economic well-being. That could well be the case in Canada if this happened to us, so therefore we must consider as carefully as we can the economic outlook of the western grain producer and afford him the opportunity of participating to the greatest extent possible in the handling of his business.

As the years go by the prairie grain producer is becoming better informed, better educated, and better able to look after himself, as long as he does not run into too much government interference. I fear that there is a tendency in the present administration to interfere to a great degree with the Canadian Wheat Board as a selling agency. The board was initially set up as a selling agency.

I think there are few in this House who remember the years when producers who were not very well off had to sell their grain in the fall at a low price because they had to have money to pay their debts. This was the reason the Canadian Wheat Board came into existence under the administration of the Right Hon. R. B. Bennett. The bad things about his administration are remembered, but seldom is he given credit for the good things he did, and establishing the Canadian Wheat Board was one of them. In those years the person who was able to hold his grain until the spring or the following summer sometimes was able to get two or three times as much for it, and that increased the deficit balance which then existed between one producer and another. However, through the marketing agency of the Canadian Wheat Board all producers now receive pretty well the same amount, provided the grade and quality are the same.