

*Canada Grain Act*

## CANADA GRAIN ACT

**Mr. H. R. Argue (Assiniboia):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of the house a grievance having to do with a motion adopted by the committee on agriculture during the last session of parliament recommending that the government should consider the advisability of referring the Canada Grain Act to this committee on agriculture for study at a future session of parliament. Also, the statement made by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) in reply to a question I asked him on this matter on December 16. My question, as reported at page 970 of *Hansard*, was as follows:

Can the minister say whether the committee on agriculture and colonization will be called together early in the new year in order to review the Canada Grain Act, as recommended by that committee at the last session of the house? As the minister is aware, it would be called for the purpose of discussing the question of overages and box car distribution.

To this the minister replied:

My hon. friend is aware that it is not the duty of any minister to call committees together. As a member of the committee in question, my hon. friend is in a position to do so. I have no amendments to the Canada Grain Act to recommend. There will be later in the session matters that I will wish to refer to the committee; but the subject matter of its business, I assume, will be determined by the committee.

I asked this supplementary question:

Has the minister any objection to the government's carrying out the committee's recommendation, that the Canada Grain Act be referred to the committee on agriculture for study?

To this the minister replied:

I have nothing to do with the matter. If the committee meets and desires to undertake that work, I shall endeavour to co-operate. But I have no wish either that it should be done or should not be done.

Following that statement by the minister, Mr. Speaker, I communicated with the chairman of the agriculture committee, the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras), and I suggested to him that the committee should be called together to consider whether at this session we should undertake a review of the Canada Grain Act.

In reply to my letter the hon. member for Provencher pointed out, I believe quite correctly, that according to the standing orders of this house a committee can only consider matters which have been referred to it by the house. Therefore, according to the chairman of the committee, the committee can undertake a review of the Canada Grain Act only when a motion is passed by the house directing that such a review be undertaken.

On Monday, March 15, the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) presented a motion to refer the annual report of the

[Mr. Speaker.]

Canadian wheat board, together with the annual report of the board of grain commissioners, to the committee on agriculture. My point is that in that recommendation there was no inclusion of a study of the Canada Grain Act as recommended by the committee on agriculture during the last session of parliament. On the important issue of reviewing the Canada Grain Act, which has not had a general overhaul since 1930, the minister says it is up to members of the committee. Then when a member of the committee endeavours to have the committee undertake such a review he finds that, according to the chairman, a committee can undertake the review only when matters are referred to it by the house and when those matters are included in its terms of reference.

I think that the members of the committee on agriculture last session unanimously came to the conclusion that it was time for an overhaul of the Canada Grain Act. Certainly they came to the conclusion that it was time a thorough study was made of the provisions of the Canada Grain Act.

The Canada Grain Act came into existence in 1912, being a substitute then for a previous act, namely the Manitoba grain act. There was a general overhaul in 1930. There has been no substantial review of the Canada Grain Act since 1930. By refusing to refer the Canada Grain Act to the committee on agriculture I think the government is breaking faith with and flouting the wishes of the members of that previous committee. That previous committee of this house studied the Canada Grain Act and found that a further review should take place. Last year we held quite a number of meetings. Our evidence extended to 162 pages and we discovered, with respect to the Canada Grain Act and its administration, a great many things that should be the subject of review. The whole question of grain overages was a bone of contention. I think it is fair to say that the members of the board of grain commissioners left a great many questions unanswered. There were put to the members of the board some extremely important questions that they were unable to answer.

I think our experience last year demonstrates that there needs to be an overhaul in the personnel of the board of grain commissioners. Certainly there needs to be a review of the authority contained in the Canada Grain Act. We were unable to get information as to the quantity of grain that was lost through drying. We were unable to get a breakdown of hundreds of thousands of bushels of overages and shortages in the various grades other than the straight commercial grades. We reviewed what has since