

Western Grain Stabilization

The Minister of Agriculture was out in the west last weekend and a headline appeared in the *Brandon Sun*, that great journal, on Monday, April 28, as follows: "Whelan says opposition delaying farm legislation".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dinsdale: Under that heading and the byline of Garth Stouffer, who is the associate editor of the *Brandon Sun* and a man very knowledgeable of agricultural matters, we find these words:

Arguing that opposition members of the House of Commons are afraid Liberal farm legislation might be "too good" and denouncing the media and others who made large of the egg scandal of last summer, Hon. Eugene Whelan rode through rainy Manitoba on Saturday praising farmers and calling on the rest of Canadian society to match the efficiency and productivity of the people on the land.

"If all other walks of life were as efficient (as producers) as the farmer," he told a meeting in the high school auditorium at Minnedosa, "there would be no inflation today."

He went on in like vein, telling the farmers what fine people they are. I think, in the words of Shakespeare, that he doth protest too much. When you see that sort of approach being made to the farmers, it is an indication that there is something badly amiss in communication between the government and farm producers.

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The report goes on to stress in the following terms the fact that the minister was exceptionally cordial in trying to win friends and influence people:

About 45 minutes late for the meeting at Minnedosa, Mr. Whelan made up for his tardiness by standing outside the gym door after his address, shaking hands with most of the 200 who listened to him, in somewhat the manner of the parson saying goodbye to his parishioners on a Sunday.

Perhaps we could have added somewhat like the politician who shakes hands to win friends and influence people. The story says that he went further:

In addition to just shaking hands, the plain-spoken farmer who represents the urban riding of Windsor, also answered questions.

In fact, when particularly challenging arguments were thrown his way, Eugene Whelan appeared willing to spend the rest of the afternoon in man-to-man debate—

He really wanted to get his point home to each individual farmer.

—but his aides—who knew he had to return to Brandon, to catch a government jet for a trip to Portage la Prairie and then drive to an agricultural society meeting at Macgregor—urged him along to the front door and into a car for the trip south from Minnedosa.

What I want to stress here is the point that was repeated in the headline, "Whelan says opposition delaying farm legislation". In specific terms this is how he put it during his speech:

'The House is not moving on legislation as fast as possible,' he told the meeting, referring to legislation designed to set up an income guarantee subsidy program for agricultural producers and legislation designed to make for easier access into agriculture for young people, through changes in farm credit.

'It is taking too long,' he said. 'I feel there are people in the House of Commons—on the other side—who are afraid the legislation will be too good . . . not that it will not be good enough . . . and because they feel it will be too good they are holding it up so they can blame the minister of agriculture.'

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

As a matter of fact we are not blaming the Minister of Agriculture this afternoon. We are blaming the Minister of Justice who has some responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board. It is passing strange to me that the Minister of Agriculture should be carrying the torch on the hustings for this legislation that is now being debated in the House of Commons when he has absolutely no responsibility for carrying that legislation through the House of Commons.

Incidentally the headline in the *Brandon Sun* is very similar to a press release by the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board when he ran into difficulty with the predecessor to this legislation in his attempt to stabilize prairie farm incomes. On May 7, 1971, the hon. gentleman issued a press release in which he said that the opposition was holding up that valuable piece of legislation. It sounds like the same old record, over and over again.

The minister was doing this even though it was becoming abundantly clear that the bill would subsidize the incomes of prairie producers at the poverty level. As a result of the debate in the House of Commons, and as a result of the strong and growing protests from the producers that bill finally was withdrawn, and now some four years later it is turning up in a slightly modified form. Again the grain producers of western Canada are beginning to respond and point out some of the weaknesses in the legislation.

I think it is important that an extended debate be held in this House of Commons so that ultimately the producers will be able to make a judgment concerning whether this legislation does in fact do what it is purported to do rather than stabilize, as was the case in the former legislation, the income of prairie producers at the poverty level. I say the fact that the two ministers who are closely involved with agricultural matters have taken to the hustings is an indication that they are receiving a message somewhat similar to that which came from the farmers and producers back in 1970 and 1971.

I mentioned the appearance on the hustings of the Minister of Agriculture. The minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board was in the same area about five days earlier. I guess he was the John the Baptist announcing the coming of the Minister of Agriculture. Actually it is the Minister of Agriculture who should have responsibility for these matters. Not only should he be discussing them on the hustings among the farm community and attempting to unload the propaganda—and I use the word "unload" for obvious reasons—that this legislation is being delayed in the House of Commons, he should be carrying the legislation here in the House of Commons, because essentially it is a problem which comes under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture. The fact that it has been carried by the Minister of Justice who has some responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board is an indication of how confused the government approach is to agricultural matters. I shall deal with that in greater detail in a moment.

In this bill the line of demarcation is made crystal clear, even though it is confusing here in the House of Commons. The minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board was at a meeting in Brandon at which he dealt