

*Deliveries of Grain to Feed Mills*

The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate suggested that the government should have either introduced legislation or stated its policy on this occasion. In looking at the report made last year by the standing committee on agriculture and colonization I found that there was not an extensive discussion of this problem, and I reached the conclusion from the recommendation made by them that the committee wanted a much more extensive investigation conducted than was the case last year.

Last year they touched on the problem when they were dealing with the annual report of the board of grain commissioners. They raised a question as to the number of mills licensed by the board of grain commissioners and the number not licensed. They raised a question whether or not P.F.A.A. payments were made by the unlicensed mills. These payments are not made by the unlicensed mills. Two or three similar questions were brought up. There was not an extensive discussion, so the committee ended up with the recommendation that something further be done.

We gave consideration to the question of what type of further investigation should be conducted, whether a commission should be appointed to look into the matter or whether it might better be aired before a committee of the House of Commons. We reached the conclusion that the latter was the best method to follow at this stage.

I consulted with the members of the Canadian wheat board. They said they would welcome a study of the marketing system, the system of quotas and so on. The government has no particular intention with regard to this matter. The hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska wanted me to state what my intentions were with respect to the committee. I am not suggesting any plan or giving any directions to the committee whatsoever. The committee are simply being afforded the opportunity to do what they indicated last year they would like to do.

With the reference of this subject matter to the committee its members now will be in a position to call witnesses and have the case presented to them. An opportunity will be provided to interested parties in the prairie provinces to come and state their case before the committee. What the committee winds up with after having reviewed the situation is something we will watch with interest, but the government are not taking any position whatsoever on this problem. We are awaiting the consideration of the whole question by the committee. The committee are widely representative of the farming interests in the three prairie provinces and in part of British

[Mr. Churchill.]

Columbia. The members of the House of Commons who are on the committee are farmers with practical experience in the methods that have been followed now for so many years, and they have the background information with regard to the marketing system and the operation of the feed mills.

Nevertheless, there is a matter that requires to be cleared up; whether all mills should be brought under agreements with the wheat board, or whether the situation should be left as it is at the present time. That is a question I cannot answer. There is the question of whether something should be done with regard to the P.F.A.A. payments, reference to which will be found in a question and answer on page 421 of the evidence heard by the committee last year. I am not in a position to answer that question.

And so it goes. The committee could consider the prosecutions that have been undertaken with regard to people delivering to feed mills or feed mills accepting deliveries. Again, I cannot give the answer to the question of whether this system should be continued or discontinued. Under a proper democratic system a committee of the House of Commons, representative of all parties in the house and of the farming interests of Canada, will be able to examine the problem and come to some conclusion.

Whether any change will be required in the act, I am not in a position to state at the moment; but I want it clearly understood that there is no intention on the part of the government to direct the committee in any way. It is intended that there should be a free and frank discussion of a problem which has caused some misunderstanding or disturbed many prairie dwellers. If this is the best way to clear it up, that will satisfy the situation, but it was quite obvious that we had reached the stage where there should be a general airing of the problem. I am sure that many members of the house who have had letters from their constituents or who have written me about this matter would like to have all the evidence submitted.

The committee will be able to call before them the members of the Canadian wheat board, the members of the board of grain commissioners, representatives of elevator companies, representatives of the wheat pools, representatives of the feed mills and individual farmers who have a case to state in connection with these operations. Consequently it will be open to anyone to express his opinion with regard to the operation of the marketing system and the operation of the particular acts that govern this matter and to discuss changes that may be in the minds of some people or, as the hon. member