

*Canadian Wheat Board Act (No. 2)*

size of the property and nothing to do with the amount of produce delivered.

The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre said that Roy Atkinson, president of the National Farmers' Union, would not be allowed to operate in this capacity. We all know that Roy Atkinson is a farmer so he probably has a permit book and would be eligible for election as a producer. Many of those who are interested in becoming a member of the advisory committee could just as well be producers.

There are a few things that I think we should consider. One is the fact that the stabilization bill, as brought in by this government, is open only to actual producers. We have to consider that therefore there is an intermingling of ideas, suggestions and words of wisdom for the benefit of the grain industry of Canada.

The hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo (Mr. Marchand) suggested that consumers should be considered for this committee. This is one of the things that I think we must be careful about and see that there is no misconception whatever that benefits the grain producers in western Canada receive will create a hardship for the consumer. Such is not the case. In the Agriculture Committee on May 18, the hon. member for Kamloops-Cariboo said:

I think that on these government boards, producer boards, there should be a consumer interest in there or a consumer point of view, and I feel very strongly about that.

Mr. Speaker, the consumer is protected under the two-price wheat legislation whereby grain is purchased for home consumption at \$3.25 per bushel and that cannot be changed until that Act expires in another three or four years. Therefore, this bill is not going to create any problem whatsoever for the consumer.

We have to consider that the grain industry in Canada is of fundamental importance to our economic well-being because it contributes between \$3 billion and \$4 billion to our balance of trade. This should not be overlooked. Just imagine what our deficit would be if that amount were not included. Instead of being \$5 billion it would be up toward \$9 billion. In view of the fact that producers are seeking whatever they can get on the world market for their product, they should have the opportunity of making an input into the marketing and saying how it should be handled.

● (1150)

The present minister in charge of the Wheat Board is creating more difficulties for western grain producers who come under the Canadian Wheat Board than he is solving. Lack of adequate transportation hinders the movement of grain. Boxcars are vitally important to move other kinds of grain besides wheat. Clearly, the proposed advisory group will need to have greater input, greater say with regard to Canadian Wheat Board policies, than has been the case in the past.

As the new advisory group, if the amendment passes, is to be elected, it is clear that people well known to producers and farm organizations stand a better chance of election than those who are unknown. We have heard the names of several politicians mentioned as possible candidates for the proposed advisory group. These politicians, as I say, stand a better chance of running successfully, because they are well known. At present there is no mech-

[Mr. Towers.]

anism whereby the names of people unknown but willing to run can be put before producers. As well, we must consider that it takes a great deal of money to cover the Wheat Board country comprising Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Peace River district of British Columbia. No matter how well qualified an individual may be to advise the Canadian Wheat Board, he, or she, probably cannot afford to travel around the area and become known. Therefore the unknown candidate is at a disadvantage, whereas people like Roy Atkinson, for instance, or Mr. Turner, the president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, enjoy a great advantage, in that they are relatively well known and can advise the Canadian Wheat Board. As the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) suggested, we should broaden the base and enable more people to become involved in the advisory process.

We are considering a question of fundamental importance. I think that producers and consumers in future will want to rely less on bureaucrats for guidance. I hope the House will accept the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil), and enable more producers to be involved in the governing and advisory process.

**Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, the amendment the House is considering is simple, but an important principle is at stake. During the last 40 years almost every democratic country has turned even more decision-making power over to experts. In the case of wheat, in 1935, over 40 years ago, the farmers of the west turned certain decision-making powers over to a board appointed by the federal government, known as the Canadian Wheat Board. The Canadian Wheat Board has been an unique and useful institution for stabilizing the price to farmers and helping Canada to expand wheat sales on world markets. But no board set up by man is perfect. In the past the power to decide with regard to the sale of certain farm products was handled by the group of experts who represented some 200,000-odd producers. The amendment seeks to set up an advisory board or committee, which would wield some of the power formerly wielded dictatorially by the group of experts; and, what is more, the proposed group is to be established on an elected basis.

From my experience as a minister I can say, confidently, that the views I was given by the Wheat Board and the advisory committee of my day did not necessarily reflect the views of producers. It soon became clear to me, as I said in the second reading debate, that the advisory committee I had appointed consisted of representatives of giant corporations whose interest was to maximize the profits and efficiency of their corporations. Therefore their advice was largely the advice of vested interests. Those representatives were concerned about how best to serve those interests. They could represent either private companies or co-operatives. But the result was the same: they wanted to do the best job they could for their particular organizations. Therefore, no matter how well intentioned such people may be in giving advice, they do not represent the voice of farmers. The farmer has become suspicious; he thinks that perhaps his views do not always get first consideration.

The amendment proposed by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) is simple and shows how we can turn the