

Wheat Sales

the grains group, Rod Bryden, started to appear in Winnipeg more and more. They held a meeting every Monday. Finally the minister and his officials panicked. Orders were passed down from on high, to use the minister's words, to dispose of the grain.

We all know what happened in 1970. Our grain was fire-saled around the world. It was common knowledge in the grain trade in those days that the Canadian Wheat Board did not have the right to make a decision. That is another reason this resolution is before the House today. The minister in charge of the Wheat Board ordered a reduction in commercial stocks of some 200 million bushels without any compensation to the producers. This is what led to the five consecutive drops in farm deliveries. The minister purposely set about scaring the pants off western farmers. Change and confusion reigned supreme. All he did was stir the pot.

Virtually nothing was done overseas to promote markets. That is where the real changes were. There were quota changes, boxcar allocation changes, a block system was set up, a rapeseed committee, the whole works. It was not until disaster struck in eastern Europe and Asia that western farmers were bailed out of their difficulties—no thanks to the minister and the grains group. All they proved was that Canada could give away her grain.

I wish to quote Mr. A. M. Runciman, president of United Grain Growers. He is probably one of the most respected men in the grain business in Canada. He was commenting on the conclusion in the Canadian Wheat Board report and said:

One cannot criticize the Canadian Wheat Board for selling the grain offered it by farmers at the best competitive prices. It is the board's job to sell grain and the government's to create policies and programs that will enhance farmers' incomes. . . . And we could be highly critical of a government that, outside of its \$68 million "two-price wheat" program, provided little in the way of income support to prairie grain growers.

A turmoil of farm policies, muddled by political rhetoric and conflicting views of farm organizations, carried over from the previous year. A National Farm Products Marketing Council was finally established and this inward-looking legislation was accompanied by conflicting government publicity—

He made reference to the two-price wheat subsidy. The so-called wheat payment often went to people who never produced a bushel of grain. He said nothing was done overseas to promote the sale of our grain. There are two overseas offices, one in Tokyo and one in London. We used to have an office in the Common Market, in Brussels, but it was closed. This was the biggest slap in the face to the Common Market that Canada could have delivered. It was finally reopened last year.

The minister commented on the fact that we have 208 million bushels of wheat in storage. That was the amount on June 6. We still have seven weeks to go until the end of the crop year, at which time the minister said there will be 100 million bushels available. The new crop will not start coming in until around October 1. From my vantage point, this makes the picture look a little desperate.

The minister likes to compare Canadian wheat prices with American wheat prices. That is like comparing apples with oranges. You cannot compare Canadian wheat with American wheat, and the minister knows it. I remember when France started dumping grain on the world market

[Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek).]

in 1962. The Wheat Board received some real direction from the government. They were ordered not to match the French price cuts. The Americans agreed to go along with that. We held back. The result was that in the next year we had record sales and record high prices. This is the type of direction the Canadian Wheat Board needs. We have had nothing but stopgap measures, when what we need is national programs. The minister was nothing more than a front man for a bunch of civil servants.

• (2110)

Some mention was made of the 2,000 hopper cars. Over the last 15 years the average increase in Canadian grain exports has been less than 2 per cent per year. I suggest the 2,000 hopper cars are welcome, but I still say they were purchased for political reasons. I should like to think that the Canadian Wheat Board is now doing all right, that it is coming out of its slump along with the minister. The theory of supply-management appeared along with the Lift program in 1976, with the marketing bill in 1970-71, with the stabilization bill of 1971 and the adjustment program of the same year. Members of the NDP and the Liberal Party were in support of the principles of those four programs. I believe in supply-management, but I believe in it at the farm or ranch gate where decisions can be made by 250,000 farmers rather than by a handful of bureaucrats.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hamilton (Swift Current-Maple Creek): I suggest to my NDP friends that a vote for this government is a vote in approval of LIFT and supply-management, a vote in approval of the sale of grain below the cost of production. This is a resolution which western members will oppose at their peril. No matter what the outcome of this debate, western farmers will remain on their land, using their skills; and they can hold their own in world markets against any fair competition.

Mr. Ross Whicher (Bruce): I will try to be very careful tonight, Mr. Speaker, because I have had the privilege for a few months of being the chairman of the agricultural committee. During that time I have had nothing but the greatest co-operation from my friends in the official opposition, in the NDP and the Social Credit party. I think one of the reasons for that co-operation is that I have attempted to the best of my ability to run the committee in a completely unbiased fashion, being as fair as possible. I assure you that this is my intention tonight: I want to be fair and unbiased. I will simply bring to the attention of hon. members some of the facts as I see them.

I speak of the western problems as an outsider but as one who has been there and studied the situation as much as possible. I intend to present the facts as fairly as I can. In order to do so I think we should go back to 1969 when as a member of the committee on agriculture I had the privilege of visiting western Canada with a number of other members from both sides of the House. At the time that part of the country was in a crisis; there is no other way to describe it. If I needed to underline that fact, all I would have to do is refer to the speeches made by hon. members from western Canada, members of the Conserva-