

Canada Grain Bill

of the government believe they can bring the farmer to his knees to the point where he will leave the small farm or the big farm, or reduce him to the point where he must accept the guaranteed income the Minister without Portfolio in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) proposed on October 29 to this House.

I do not believe there is any argument to substantiate the suggestion that elevators can operate more efficiently at 60 per cent of capacity. I know an elevator should keep one or two bins empty in order to facilitate the movement of grain within the elevator, but no elevator which operates efficiently needs to have 40 per cent of its space empty. No real argument can be made in that regard. There is no doubt in my mind that this government is going well out of its way to bring about a general weakening on the agricultural scene. Clauses 71 and 97 of the bill were very carefully examined by the committee. I attempted to introduce an amendment to clause 97 so that the farmer would have the right to deliver to the elevator of his choice or to load over the platform.

It is commonly agreed that with the concept of reducing the efficiency of an elevator to 60 per cent of its capacity, the government will automatically increase handling charges through the Board of Grain Commissioners. One of the first things they will do within the next three months is to increase the handling charges of elevator companies. Mark my words, Mr. Speaker—I notice the Minister of Agriculture is paying careful attention—one of the first things done by the Board of Grain Commissioners will be to increase the handling charges of elevator companies. They may not reduce storage charges, but by increasing handling charges they will encourage greater handling and less storage revenue for the elevator companies. I notice that the hon. member for Assiniboia is attempting to make a remark. It is too bad he could not make it this afternoon when his famous amendment was before the House.

• (9:00 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have ten minutes left and you will just have to listen to me. The Minister of Agriculture did not have enough faith or did not trust sufficiently the hon. member for Assiniboia to allow him to explain the amendment that was in his name. It was an attempt by the minister to discredit the hon. member for Assiniboia.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Horner: The first thing this government will do is allow the handling charges to be increased. What effect will that have? Basically, it will encourage grain companies to increase their handling charges and reduce their storage. A number of things are taking place on the grain scene today. We have the announced policy of the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, made on December 9 and followed by 200,000 pamphlets, at a cost of something like \$50,000, encouraging producers to accept

[Mr. Horner.]

the new concept. The farmers have yet to buy the idea. The Canada Grain Act should spell out exactly what the grain policy is. It fails to do so, and in fact it attempts to hide the basic issues facing Canada.

There is no question in my mind that the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act should remain in force. However, its effect should be reversed so that instead of farmers paying storage on the first 178 million bushels they should pay storage on the last 178 million bushels in commercial storage. The government should assume the responsibility of our being in a volume market. Producers and salesmen must have their product on the shelves and it must be for sale. If the average amount of grain in storage has been 400 million bushels in past years, we should be prepared to put 400 million bushels of the shelf and keep it there.

One of the things that has most hurt Canadian sales over past years has been the long and loud cry of the Minister of Agriculture and the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board that our surpluses are hurting our markets. They are only hurting our markets when we are complaining about them—not when we joyfully carry them. Nobody complains about the amount of pork and beans on the shelves of warehouses across Canada. Wheat is a commodity for sale and we have to meet our commitments by making large volume sales. We must be prepared to carry it on our shelves to meet large sales.

Protein grading is a non-visual criterion to which we must pay attention. Our international markets dictate quite emphatically that we must be prepared to carry, if necessary, more rather than less grain on our shelves because there will be more varieties of grain; there will be No. 2 grain with three criteria for protein content, either less than 13 per cent, above 13 or 14 per cent. In other words, there will be more varieties of grain for sale and therefore we should have more products on the shelf. That is the essence of protein grading of wheat for our international sales. Therefore, the concept that the government should refrain from paying part of the storage is completely wrong. In fact, storage charges should be reduced.

The present legislation sets out that producers pay for the first 178 million bushels and the government pays anything thereafter. This should be reversed. I suggest that the government should pay storage on the first 400 million bushels in storage and the farmer should pay for the rest. This would bring about a degree of continuity and would discourage the weak-kneed, bleeding ministers who cry out. To paraphrase the words of the Prime Minister, this would discourage the weak-kneed, bleeding Minister of Agriculture and the minister in charge of the Wheat Board from crying out and lamenting aloud about our surplus. The idea is that if the government paid the storage on the first 400 million bushels it would discourage the weak-kneed, bleeding-nosed ministers who cannot convince members in their own camp.

The second proposal that should be rejected by the House concerns our general grain policy. I refer to the proposal that the producer should pick up the losses of the annual pools of wheat, oats and barley. What kind of