

Bill would make their elevator system a collection agency for their competitors, the pools, at the 1,300 points where such pools have no elevators; that the elevator systems are compelled by law to receive any farmer's grain, and to compel them at the same time to guarantee weights and grades at rival terminal elevators after the farmer has had possession of the grain en route, is unfair and unjust. They argue that if the pools want to do business at the thirteen hundred points where they now have no elevator, they should build and operate their own houses, and not seek to compel the Elevator Companies by law, to place their large capital investment at the disposal of rival interests, simply to enable the pools to carry out their contracts with the pool farmers whereby they are bound to accept their grain whether they have facilities or not.

Those are the claims of the two parties. Now, what is the solution of this controversy? I must confess I have had some difficulty in arriving at a conclusion to guide my own action in supporting or opposing this Bill. The grain trade claims there is unfairness in the legislation, and that it practically amounts to confiscation of their property. While it contains elements of injustice, I would not go so far as to say that it involves confiscation. There are occasions when seeming injustices are imposed by legislation. Public opinion becomes so pronounced at times that the general good takes precedence over personal or private interests. Take the case of prohibition for instance. Sentiment as wide-spread as the Dominion itself demanded that the operation of bars for the sale of liquors must be removed from hotels, and notwithstanding millions of dollars invested in the hotel business which were practically ruined, the general good was considered first, and the cry of vested interests did not awaken much sympathy. The unprecedented movement by the farmers which culminated in the formation of the grain pools is so pronounced that we are practically asked to disregard private interests in order that their demands may prevail. We are brought face to face with this issue in Bill No. 8. Perhaps the statements of representatives of the farmers themselves may help us to a conclusion.

Mr. Forke, the leader of the Progressives, in another place, opposed the same Bill last year, and gave his reasons. Honourable gentlemen may have read them, but I will put them upon the record:

I think the right hon. leader of the opposition has stated the case plainly and fairly as I see it. I know that in making that statement I am running contrary to all my friends who sit behind me. It has cost me

Hon. Mr. LAIRD.

some effort to make the statement, but I cannot view it in any other way. If you put responsibilities upon the local elevator you must give that elevator also some privileges to protect its own interest. The farmer has always a right to ship his grain to any terminal elevator he may choose, but if he does so he ought to take some responsibility. I know very well that in making that statement I am not making any friends but I am doing what I believe to be in the interest of justice in voting as I propose to do on the measure.

It is true Mr. Forke supported the Bill half-heartedly this year, but he cannot recall his words of last year, as the situation has not changed in the meantime. If I was forced to a conclusion one way or the other just now, I think I would be inclined to support Mr. Forke's opinion. But happily I see a medium course to follow which gives us a loophole whereby the farmers' pools may attain the end they desire, while at the same time doing no injustice to the grain trade.

During the sitting of the Committee the recognized spokesman for the elevator companies stated that they were prepared to sell to the pool an elevator at each of the 1,300 points where the pools are not presently represented; that in case of dispute they would allow the Board of Grain Commissioners to decide what particular elevator was to be sold; and they were prepared to arbitrate the price and terms. That was his statement before the Committee. The question then arises, are the pools in a position financially to take up this offer? The evidence before the Committee shows that the pools withhold two cents per bushel on every bushel the pools marketed for the purpose of building and extending their system. Handling fifty per cent of a \$400,000,000 crop, this would give them \$4,000,000 annually in cash to devote to this purpose. The evidence further showed that the cost of a new elevator of 30,000 bushels capacity was approximately \$10,000, and that the Manitoba Government had sold 70 elevators last year to the pools at an average price of \$7,000 each. So that \$8,000,000 would be required to equip the pools with an elevator at every one of the 1,300 points at which they are not presently represented. With \$4,000,000 in cash annually available for the purpose, it is clear that the pools could easily finance the transaction, and be in a position to have an elevator at every shipping point in the three Western Provinces, ready to handle the 1926 crop.

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: They are not obligated to take the two cents. They are given the power.

Hon. Mr. LAIRD: They took it last year.

Hon. Mr. WILLOUGHBY: Yes.