

Canadian Wheat Board Act

barley for feed purposes would indeed be generally welcomed by the western farmers.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Finally I wish to say that this is all part of the picture. One cannot say the wheat board is an entity by itself, and everything is well. When we were in office we brought about a system of technical schools of which the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Starr) was the proponent. This has now been phased out. Under that plan 75 per cent of the cost of construction was paid by the federal authorities. I would like to see assistance given in all parts of Canada for the establishment of agricultural colleges so that the training will be available to more and more Canadians who want to stay on the farms, and a similar plan established whereby the federal government would contribute 75 per cent of the costs. This would not only make available increased knowledge to those who otherwise would be denied it, but would also encourage research which would be of tremendous benefit to the farmers in all parts of Canada.

There are many other matters with which I would have dealt but I will not do so because I said I would not take long. I will conclude by saying to the minister that I am very happy the Liberal party has now embraced the principle which we advanced in sales of wheat to communist countries. I belong to those who are not impressed by the argument that the sale of wheat is the sale of a strategic material. We must use our tremendous potentialities in agriculture in Canada to help feed the world. We cannot do that by accepting the suggestion, which was advanced by the Liberal party between 1958 and 1963, that sales of wheat to communist countries should not take place.

Mr. Speaker, making the legislation permanent does not of course mean that it is permanent; it can be changed any time. But it will not be changed so long as there are farmers and wheat producers who are aware of the benefits which flow from the wheat board act.

Mr. Ed. Schreyer (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to listen to the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), particularly when he is dealing with a subject matter which is as close to him and to the constituents he represents as is the Canadian Wheat Board. I may say that it is my own opinion that much of what has been related to us here this afternoon is accepted as a general consensus by most grain and wheat producers in western Canada, and I

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

have no intention at this time of entering into any polemic with any hon. members to my right as to who deserves prime credit for the increased sales of wheat by the Canadian Wheat Board. However, I just want to say that much of the controversy which blew up about three years ago, at the time of the change of governments, regarding who merited special praise for the increased volume of sales by the wheat board, is due to a misunderstanding. I feel that even if the Canadian Wheat Board, acting on its own, had succeeded in negotiating a large and special sale, this would have come to nought had the government of the day not been prepared to make special credits available. My understanding is that the former administration was prepared to extend special credits by means of which the wheat board was then able to make large scale sale commitments to communist China.

Whether or not the then minister of agriculture had a very personal and individual role in that connection is still not clear to me and I do not think it is the prime point to be considered. The important point is whether the government at that time was prepared to make special credits or guarantees available. It did, and the sale was consummated. I believe that most people in the farming areas of western Canada understand this to be so. Certainly there can be no dispute about the fact to which the right hon. Leader of the Opposition made reference, that for years the preceding Liberal government refused to consider and implement any legislation to make available cash advances for farm stored grain. The 1950's were extraordinary years for many grain producers in western Canada. There was the problem of surpluses coupled with low prices, and certainly it was very necessary, because of the extraordinary problem facing these people, to bring in a program which would make cash advances available for farm stored grain. A special effort was required to cope with a special problem, and this was done. Governments cannot afford to act timidly and they do not have the right to evade unusual responsibilities when the times are unusually difficult, and certainly this criticism directed at members of the Liberal party is justified.

I do not want to say that there is nothing objectionable in Bill C-106. For the most part it deals with administrative changes in the organization and administration of the Canadian Wheat Board Act. I do not regard anything in it as being a change of substance. It is all procedural. Yet, if the minister and