

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING DETERMINATION OF PAYMENT FOR WHEAT—EXTENSION OF APPLICATION TO FLAX- SEED, RYE AND RAPESEED

The House resumed, from Wednesday, May 26, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lang that Bill C-238, to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make two points this afternoon with reference to the amendments to the Wheat Board Act proposed in Bill C-238. The first point relates to the inclusion of rye, rapeseed and flax, as well as oats under certain circumstances, under the Canadian Wheat Board. I appreciate the fact that this is merely enabling legislation permitting the executive to pass orders in council, if and when it sees fit.

I am sure the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, as well as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson), have received representations to the effect that the only cash crops the farmers have had for a number of years have been cereal crops, other than wheat or coarse grains, including oats and barley. The only cash crops they have had have been rye, rapeseed and flax. Let us deal first with rapeseed.

The introduction of this crop into western Canada took place at Tisdale, Saskatchewan, during the war. This crop was used successfully in the production of edible oils. It was introduced in that area by a man by the name of Kermit Purdy who became very successful. Rapeseed at that time ran at approximately 2,000 pounds to the acre and was worth about six cents per bushel on the farm. It was first introduced in the Carrot River Valley, and has since been introduced to other areas in western Canada. It was introduced then because of the same problem now facing producers. They were having difficulty making deliveries of grain in time to pay their expenses and to keep their families and their enterprises.

The same situation existed when wheat became surplus. Rapeseed was then used, along with rye and flax as a cash crop. If these grains are put under the Canadian Wheat Board, we may find western farmers in the same situation, without any cash crop to meet current expenditures. Hon. members with some knowledge of western Canada, and the production of crops there, will appreciate there are certain areas in which stock growing is not a profitable enterprise. In these same areas, the farmers can attain a high production of wheat and coarse grains including rye, rapeseed and flax. This is because of a shortage of water in many places. I could name a number and I will do so this afternoon. The minister knows one of these areas very well, namely Kindersley which is adjacent to Saskatoon. Other areas include Rosetown, and Vulcan, Alberta. These are basically cereal producing areas rather than stock producing.

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One of the greatest dangers inherent in the Canadian Wheat Board taking over these crops is the suggestion that they will be put on a quota system similar to wheat. As a result, the small scale farmer will have no cash crop to use for paying current expenses. I oppose that part of this bill. I had hoped the minister might have said this is a method by which farmers can obtain cash. The farmers in western Canada do not need handouts and they are not asking for them. What they need is a market for their produce. Before this bill is given second reading, I hope the minister will say the government does not intend to create a situation under which there will be no cash crops available to the operators of these small farms. If that is not so, then members of all parties on this side who have some knowledge of the situation can only come to the conclusion there will be no possibility of cash crop production on farms in order that farmers can pay immediate expenses and make a living. If the government takes any other attitude, then we must assume this is umbrella legislation which will deny farmers the opportunity of making enough money to support their families and pay immediate expenses, with the result they will be driven from the land. That is the first point I wanted to make.

My second point is related to the first. For a long time we have opposed the idea that you can control the sales of grain from one province to another. There have been literally thousands of bootleg sales between Saskatchewan and Alberta because of the quota system implemented by this government. This quota is entirely different from the old. I hope under this legislation that the minister and this government will end once and for all this control over the export of cereal grains from one province to another, particularly in western Canada where the grains involved are barley, rapeseed, rye and flax.

At the present time a great deal of grain, particularly wheat, is being produced along the western border of Saskatchewan and all across the border through Alberta to be used as feed. Very often this grain finds its way into elevators there under the quota system. The farmers in Saskatchewan do not want to bootleg their grain in contravention of the law. Many of them are not able to pay their expenses, their taxes or their liabilities without doing so. Being placed in these desperate straits, they are obliged to take the only measure at hand. As was said in "Oliver Twist", the law is an ass so far as this situation is concerned.

Today a case is being argued in Ottawa in respect of another commodity. I will not say any more than that. I would hope the result of that decision, and the result of the government's decision in the future, will be such as to carry out the objective of the constitution that we have free trade between the provinces. Many places in western Canada can produce—there is no doubt about it—grain of all types and much cheaper than it can be produced in the other provinces of Canada. This not only works a hardship on western Canada but also on eastern Canada which needs some of the cereals to feed livestock. There has been such a demand for livestock feed in Ontario and in Quebec—and I have heard all about this