

Canadian Wheat Board Act

the U.S. buy any wheat from us? Yet in point of fact last year they were about our fifteenth largest customer for wheat, not because we are nice people but because we have a product in demand in that market. We would sell them more except for the fact that under present U.S. trade law they can close the border down literally on 24 hours' notice. The trade arrangement opens up that border.

The Hon. Member talked about explaining some of the benefits for Canadian agriculture in this trade arrangement. We have tremendous potential in the market because of the quality of the product we produce. We are not afraid of competition. What we are afraid of is competition without rules. We know, for instance, that we cannot ignore American and European farm subsidies because they are hurting us, wrecking our farms. Yet we also know that we cannot compete with them because they have much larger treasuries. The common sense thing to do is to sit down at a table, work out an arrangement with rules that make sense, and go. We have done that, and the agreement provides some very great opportunities for us to sell in that market.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, in his opening remarks the Hon. Minister said: "If the Hon. Member lived on a farm". Earlier in the debate he yelled out that I do not have a Canadian Wheat Board permit. I have heard the Hon. Member make speeches about transportation in the House and in committee and, boy, he knew lots of things about railroads. When did he ever work on a railroad? The Hon. Minister should know better than to spout that kind of specious nonsense. He knows damn well that I spent 20 years here and the previous 20 years fighting for orderly marketing for grain producers in western Canada. When he was in diapers I was shovelling wheat and helping harvest grain.

Mr. Mayer: Come on, Les.

Mr. Benjamin: The Minister says we are going to have rules under the free trade agreement. I would like him to explain again. He is quite right, our products are of the best quality in the world. The only reason Americans buy durum from us and some other specialty crops and our No. 1 red spring wheat with a 16 per cent protein content is that it is better than their own. However, would the Minister explain how we keep that small, marginal market in the U.S. if our grain producers lose the Western Grain Transportation Act?

Mr. Mayer: They are not.

Mr. Benjamin: I read it myself.

Mr. Siddon: What did you read? You have not seen the agreement.

Mr. Benjamin: I read it even in the transportation annex. You can read between the lines.

Mr. Mayer: That was not the whole thing.

Mr. Benjamin: If this is such a good deal, why can the Americans sell up here with or without a Canadian Wheat Board licence when we have the best grains in the world?

The Minister still does not have an explanation of why our grain producers are better off without the two-price system.

Mr. Mayer: They are not going to be without it.

Mr. Benjamin: Oh, well, how are they going to get the \$260 million?

Mr. Mayer: We said the benefits are going to stay.

Mr. Benjamin: That money automatically becomes a subsidy under U.S. trade law which the U.S. Senate is not about to change. That means nothing has changed under the agreement. The U.S. Senate will implement a countervailing duty just like that.

The Minister conveniently forgets that President Reagan wrote to Senator Packwood, in order to get them to agree to the fast track, that the constitutional authority of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate remain in place regardless of what trade agreement Canada arrives at with the U.S. Therefore, nothing would have changed. The U.S. Congress will continue, under their rules and their laws, to slap embargoes and countervailing duties on agricultural products of all kinds and fisheries products from coast to coast. Nothing has changed. The Minister may be willing to buy a pig in a poke, but I am not and I do not think the grain producers in western Canada are either.

He still has not answered the questions. He has run away from them completely and I hope that when he gets in front of the committee he is better prepared to answer them and explain his way out of it than he has been up until now.

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, let us lay on the table what is in the deal. We have agreed not to subsidize the movement of product into the Pacific northwest through West Coast ports. We do not lose the whole Western Grain Transportation Act and the Hon. Member knows that.

Mr. Benjamin: I did not say that.

Mr. Mayer: He should not imply it either. Let me tell him what someone from the Canadian Canola Council said. Bob Broeska said:

The opportunity to compete freely in a market 10 times larger than Canada's far offsets the loss of Western Grain Transportation Act subsidies on shipments to the U.S. through western ports.

For Canola that represents about one-third of our total exports. He went on to say:

In recent years, land sown to canola on the prairies has averaged between 6 and 6.5 million acres.

But if we're successful in our U.S. marketing efforts in the next year or two, we will need an acreage base of at least eight million to meet demand.