

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

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

The House resumed, from Thursday, May 20, 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. Robert Simpson (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, when speaking on this measure on May 20 I indicated that there were one or two points I wanted to make regarding some strong objections to Bill C-238. First of all, I pointed out that I was appalled at the impropriety of the government bringing in this type of legislation. I pointed out, as did many other speakers on this side of the House, that the producers of rapeseed in western Canada in particular had been quite satisfied over the years with the opportunity they had had to produce rapeseed and to avail themselves of the cash profit. Many members on our side of the House pointed this out very clearly to the government.

There was one other point that I wanted to bring before the House in relation to the exports of grain through the port of Churchill. As I mentioned briefly on May 20, for many years people interested in exporting grain through the port of Churchill have been extremely concerned about the small amount of grain which they have been able to export through this very important port. On many occasions when we have requested the Wheat Board to announce larger shipments of grain available in Churchill, we have found that the Wheat Board in their wisdom have decided, in some cases arbitrarily I believe, that 23 million to 24 million bushels of wheat was the full amount they could allow through the port of Churchill in any given season.

They have come up with many reasons for this. However, from many investigations it has appeared to me that these decisions were reached as a result of a great deal of pressure being put upon the Wheat Board by representatives of other Canadian ports. We have seen many statements over the years by port authorities, in Montreal in particular, who have openly stated that they would strongly oppose further expenditures in relation to added facilities at the port of Churchill. Anyone who has been interested in shipping through the port of Churchill knows full well that many of the facilities that have been requested over the years are lacking at Churchill and are badly needed.

Now the government, under Bill C-238, proposes that the Wheat Board assume responsibility for the marketing of rye, flaxseed and rapeseed. I would like to bring to the attention of the government the fact that at present at the port of Churchill there are no facilities whatsoever for the handling of grains such as rapeseed, and I think the government has a responsibility to advise the House whether or not there were full consultations between it and the Wheat Board before this legislation was drawn up.

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It is easy for anyone to see what the effect of the passage of this bill will be on the port of Churchill. Up to the present the Wheat Board has not been in a position to announce just how much wheat it will have available for export from Churchill. I was told by the board that this is a result of the policy adopted in Great Britain, which is a protective policy so far as Canadian wheat is concerned. The board is therefore reluctant to give us any information on how much wheat will be available for export.

• (5:30 p.m.)

I understand that recently an announcement was made that some four million bushels of barley would be available for export from Churchill. We would like to know how much wheat we can expect to send through that port this year. Anyone who has had experience in exporting wheat through the port of Churchill realizes the tremendous savings which can accrue to the purchasers and the advantages which can accrue to the permit holders who are shipping wheat through any port in Canada. Regardless of where wheat is exported from, the amount shipped through Churchill shows an additional profit which is divided amongst all permit holders in Canada.

The government should find it easy to understand the concern felt by people who are interested in the port of Churchill for a measure which would give the Wheat Board jurisdiction over the marketing and exporting of rye, flaxseed and rapeseed. No facilities are available for the handling of rapeseed at the port of Churchill. One must conclude, therefore, that this measure will not only be detrimental to the port of Churchill but will cause further concern because it is not known how much, if any, wheat will be going through that port.

So many members on this side of the House have taken exception to Bill C-238 that I am sure the government must now realize it is not an appropriate bill to bring before the House at this time. We would like to know, for instance, if there was full discussion with the National Harbours Board and the Canadian Wheat Board regarding the lack of facilities at one of Canada's major ports. We would also like to know whether all the other ports in Canada which handle grain are also in a position to handle flaxseed, rapeseed and rye.

There have been recent difficulties with shipment through the Great Lakes. Every time difficulties arise at Vancouver, at the St. Lawrence ports or at the Lakehead, people interested in the port of Churchill are concerned to know why the facilities of Churchill are not used. When this question is brought before the House or the Wheat Board, the answer is that it is because of the relatively short shipping season and that only 23 million or 24 million bushels can be handled. This is not a valid reason because it must be realized that the shipping season could be extended.

One of the main reasons for shipping more or less coming to an end at Churchill by October 25 may be the marine insurance rates. Recently the Minister of Trans-