

Canada Grain Act

they are explained in this letter from Mr. Harold E. Voechting, of Tribune, Saskatchewan, dated April 20, 1955, which reads as follows:

Mr. Hazen Argue, M.P.,
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Mr. Argue,

As our member of parliament for our riding, I follow with interest your various speeches and debates in the House of Commons.

As a farmer, grain grower, I am vitally interested in any legislation that is for better living and working conditions for the farmer. Grain quotas, box car shortage, and storage space are as you know one of our biggest headaches on the farm, and the unequal distribution of box cars is very annoying. Under the present system, if a farmer wants to sell any grain he must take it to the elevator that the railways see fit to send cars to. Special shipping orders by the wheat board have made the car order book obsolete. I think it is time some legislation was enacted to let the farmer at least have a choice of where he can deliver his grain. We are supposed to be living in the freest country in the world, yet our government will not devise a plan that will enable the grain grower to be able to deliver his grain to the elevator of his choice.

I urge you, Mr. Argue, as our very capable M.P., to do your utmost to have the government pass such legislation at this sitting.

That sets forth the wish of western farmers to have restored to them the right to deliver grain to the elevator of their own choice.

Government members may claim that the present situation is merely temporary, that if we should have another poor crop the congestion will not be nearly as great, and that therefore it is unnecessary to amend the Canada Grain Act in this regard. However, I should like to point out to government members that modern methods of harvesting our grain crops make it possible and practical for farmers to harvest all their grain within a few weeks, and haul it out to the elevators. The farmers being very short of cash, as they are particularly when their crop is small, are anxious to haul out as much grain as they can, as quickly as they can, in order to cover their accounts. Hence they naturally attempt to haul their grain out as quickly as possible after harvesting so that even if there is a relatively small crop, as there was in 1954, the congestion continues. The congestion that has continued over the last three years with regard to this box car situation is therefore likely to continue in the future, I suggest, because of our new, modern methods of harvesting and hauling grain.

That being the case, I suggest to the government that the amendment that is required is not one to amend the Canada Grain Act just for this year, to meet a temporary situation, but is an amendment that is necessary to meet a situation that is likely to continue for many years to come.

In this demand all farm organizations in western Canada are united. The western

[Mr. Argue.]

wheat pools are speaking with one voice. The farmers' union, in one brief after another presented to the government, have mentioned the problem of box car distribution and have asked that a fair method of box car distribution be adopted. The measure I am proposing this afternoon is that the Canada Grain Act be amended to read as follows:

If, at any time, no unfilled application for a car appears in the car order book at a marketing point, the railway agent shall then apportion railway cars among the elevator companies in the proportion that the acreage has been divided among the elevator companies.

The bill in the preceding paragraph makes it possible for farmers to list their acreage and to apportion their acreage among the elevator companies at the marketing point. After they do that, as set forth in this bill, before October 1 in each year, then the number of acres allotted to each elevator shall be added up and, on the basis of the farmer's choice as outlined by the allocation of his acreage, the railway companies are accordingly required to apportion the box cars among the elevator companies.

As I have said, this fundamental principle is being supported by all farm organizations today. The Saskatchewan wheat pool has sent to the various members of parliament a brochure setting forth their opinions and their suggestions as to how this problem can be dealt with. They are asking that the farmer himself have the right, by posting his acreage, to elect where he wishes to deliver his grain and by so doing to make provision for box cars to be spotted accordingly.

The only real difference I can see between the bill that is now before the house and the proposition advanced by the western wheat pools is that by my bill the farmers would vote by open ballot, whereas the wheat pools are suggesting that the choice be made by secret ballot. If the government is prepared to adopt the suggestion of the wheat pool organization, I for one shall be pleased to support it. I do not think it makes much difference whether the farmer sets forth in his permit book, as he now does with regard to his seeded acreage, his opinion as to where he wishes to deliver his grain or whether, as the pools suggest, he expresses his opinion on a ballot which is subsequently placed in an envelope and sent to the board of grain commissioners for their guidance.

The thing that is important is the principle, namely that farmers have a right to deliver grain to the elevator of their own choice. Farmers, I believe, should have the same economic freedom as is now enjoyed by every other group in the Canadian economy.