

Canadian Wheat Board Act

means of protecting the edible oils industry from imports of U.S. soybeans into Canada by seeking to bring about a reciprocal tariff arrangement. The United States ship a great deal of soybeans into Canada and, after all, soybeans are but another source of edible oils. These soybeans come into Canada free of duty.

On the other hand, when our edible oil seeds, which basically are derived from rapeseed and flaxseed, are shipped into the United States they are subject to heavy tariff restrictions imposed by the United States government. If the Canadian government had more concern about working out a reciprocal agreement between our two countries in regard to this type of agricultural product, I believe the industry would be helped much more positively than it is being helped by the negative approach taken in this legislation.

Why not correct this inequitable situation? There is no question that if some arrangement were worked out on a more satisfactory basis, probably all the edible oil seeds that Canada could produce would be consumed in the U.S. market even for a long time to come. But as the situation rests today, we cannot do this. Some may say—indeed, the minister himself might make this claim—that it is impossible to make this arrangement with the United States government. I might point out that Canada is a huge importer of United States agricultural produce and it seems to me we have a strong bargaining position when it comes to making the situation regarding the export of our edible oil seed to the United States more equitable than it is at the present time.

I believe the rapeseed associations—I am speaking about rapeseed only at this point—have done an excellent job of marketing. The western farmer certainly is not dissatisfied with the present situation. Just as a satisfactory price is being received both for cash sales and for rapeseed sold on the futures market, the government comes in with its big club and threatens to take the rapeseed industry over by making a marketing arrangement that the farmers do not ask for and do not want.

I would remind the minister that rapeseed and flaxseed have become a very important cash crop in the diversification of western agriculture. At the present time Canadian wheat production is much greater than wheat sales on the export market. Therefore the Department of Agriculture is advising farmers to diversify. Rapeseed and flaxseed have been two viable crops in this diversification, as evidenced by the fact that many farmers are selling their rapeseed and flaxseed directly on the market for the cash price of the day, giving them the cash income that they do not get for the sale of their wheat marketed by the Wheat Board, part of the payment for which is made in the future. This is why it seems to me that this particular aspect of the bill is not only unnecessary but potentially dangerous and is something that the producer does not want.

I am concerned about the numerous statements that are being made both by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and the minister responsible for the Wheat Board in regard to over-all government policy. On April 27 the Minister of Agriculture spoke to the Canada Grains

[Mr. Thompson.]

Council in Winnipeg. Without attempting to quote him at any length, I believe it is fair to say that the gist of what the minister said was that it is the primary objective of the government in Ottawa, where the central decision will be made, to take over control of the agricultural industry on the basis that it is necessary to have centralized control in order to have a more effective way of saying what shall be grown and how it shall be marketed.

To this extent it seems to me it is the apparent policy of this government to put itself in a position where it will be able to tell the farmers of Canada what to grow, when to grow it and how it shall be merchandised. It is very obvious that the government feels this type of central decision-making is the answer to the agricultural problems that exist in Canada. If this is the policy of the government, as reflected in the different pieces of legislation regarding the agricultural industry before the House at the present time, then I think the future of agriculture in Canada is pretty dim. If this is the intent and the policy of the government, it disturbs me no end; and I believe that the placing of rapeseed, flaxseed and rye under the control of the Wheat Board is an indication that this is the policy of the government.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I cannot give my support to Bill C-238. If I represent the voice of the farmers of my constituency who are producing a great volume of rapeseed at the present time, then I have to say no, the farmers do not want this bill, they do not need it. Further, I am afraid of what might be the end result if the government is authorized at this time to implement the provisions of this bill.

I oppose the bill on the basis that these three grains—rapeseed, flaxseed and rye—are brought within the marketing provisions of the Canadian Wheat Board and I oppose it on that aspect alone. This bill would bring these three grains under the marketing scope of the Wheat Board. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the minister will listen to what the industry has to say and will allow amendments to be made to the bill when it reaches committee. Appropriate amendments would delete this aspect of the bill and thus we could take a more positive attitude, giving the bill the support it truly needs from this House of Commons.

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, on Friday last we were treated to an exchange in the House of Commons between the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the opposition about getting work done and the important bills that are not being passed. I suggest to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board that this is a bill one part of which at least could well have been left in abeyance. I refer to the part concerning rye, flaxseed and rapeseed. This provision is not necessary and should not be passed until much more consultation is carried out with the trade, the farmers and the overseas buyers. This policy has created a great deal of confusion, particularly in the rapeseed market and forward sales up to November have dropped drastically. Until the situation is made clear exporters are reluctant to put themselves in a risk