

Canadian Wheat Board Act

information became available to the producers, the producers should be given the chance by means of plebiscite to determine the best possible system. The immediate challenge that this posed to us was the obtaining of additional information for producers; and we have proceeded by asking the same committee to continue its work in an attempt to develop the appropriate information. It was with this background that the enabling sections were placed into the act.

At the same time, my concern about the rapeseed marketing system in particular led me to have frequent discussions with the Canadian Rapeseed Association and the Winnipeg Grain Exchange regarding the problems that existed, or seemed to exist, in the futures market and the spreads that could exist between the price received by the farmer and the apparent end marketing price.

I should like to pay tribute to these two organizations for the co-operation that they have given in attempting to locate difficulties in the market system and pricing mechanisms as they affect the individual farmer. I also thank them for the action they have taken in gaining the co-operation of all sections of the industry in putting into place a number of improvements to the marketing system. This kind of co-operation is certainly welcome, is very much in the interests of the producers, and should be known and understood by them.

In dealing with the legislation before the House, it is my hope that what we will try to do is to continue to give to the producers the maximum amount of information about the difficulties in the various marketing systems; that we will continue to maintain an atmosphere where the emphasis is on information rather than recrimination on trying to understand the merits of the systems that may be available. It is my clear view that no change in regard to any of the grains should be made without the fullest producer consent. Indeed, it would be folly to do otherwise. Sections of the trade other than the producers would not want any such change made, and I do not understand why anyone would want to make a change except with the fullest consent and understanding of the producers. Certainly, I would be happy to make clear my view that the consent of the producers should be obtained in the clearest possible fashion before any change is contemplated. I might also say that my view is that the very fact that we want to talk about finding the best possible system of marketing should in no way lead one to the judgment that the system is going to be changed.

I think the changes contained in this bill will improve the ability of the Canadian Wheat Board to continue its strenuous efforts to maximize the return to the Canadian producer by obtaining, in the most effective way possible, the best price and the best-sized market available to him in the world. I urge hon. members to give their support to these amendments and to assist in seeing that they become law in order that the Wheat Board is thus given additional ability and power to help the Canadian farmers. I, therefore, have the pleasure of moving the adoption of this bill on second reading and its referral to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

[Mr. Lang.]

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. R. R. Southam (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I think I can join with other members of this House, particularly those in the official opposition, in welcoming the introduction of this measure to the House of Commons. Anything that can be done to enhance the economic welfare of the agricultural industry is always welcome. The government has introduced Bill C-238, an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act, today for second reading and, as the minister says, referral to the committee for further study.

In introducing this bill in the Commons for first reading on April 21, the minister responsible for the Wheat Board also tabled a statement as to why certain changes should be made in the act. His statement started off by referring to the fact that the changes take into consideration the introduction of protein grading. This is good as the farmers and the grain trade are all in favour of the protein grading of wheat as outlined in our new Bill C-175, an act respecting grain.

The next part of his statement refers to the possible extension of the board system of marketing to rapeseed, rye and flaxseed. This suggestion, as farmers and members of the grain trade know, has stirred up another hornet's nest as this government seems prone to do from time to time, and I will have more to say about that matter a little later in my remarks. The minister went on to outline several other reasons for amending the act, including the fact that the quota delivery base has to be adjusted to the assignable acreage feature in the new quota system.

With the introduction of a pre-seeding announcement of minimum quota levels for an ensuing year, it has become necessary to make allowance for those years in which the minimum quota levels may not be achieved and it may be necessary to allow farmers to deliver the balance of the announced quota levels after the crop year has ended. This is an area that can become somewhat complicated and frustrating to our farmers. However, this government seems good at that.

The final area of concern in the minister's April 21 statement in relation to this bill dealt with the producers having stressed the desirability of the effective administration of the act with regard to grain deliveries. To this end, it was considered desirable to revise the penalty clauses in the act.

I think it would be proper at this point to suggest that it is my opinion, and I believe the opinion of a great many farmers and people connected with the grain trade, that it is high time we had a debate in the House of Commons on the present status of the Canadian Wheat Board; its record, what can be done to improve its functions in relation to Canada's very important grain industry and, in general, to defend the Wheat Board against some of the unwarranted attacks made against it in recent months. Like private industry, federal or provincial governments, the field of education and so on, we have to take stock periodically as to whether policies, functions and general administration in each of these