

Canadian Wheat Board Act

reading of this bill and its reference to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Benjamin: I should like to ask the minister a question. In considering the pros and cons of bringing rye, flax and rapeseed, all three or any one of them, under the jurisdiction of the Wheat Board, has the minister taken into account as an important factor the support forthcoming over a number of years by way of resolutions from the membership conventions of the wheat pools, the Federation of Agriculture and the National Farmers Union, support which has been forthcoming for as long as 20 years?

Mr. Lang: Yes, it has certainly been considered by me. It was one of the factors which led me to undertake an inquiry into the marketing system. I notice that in recent years some of these organizations have delicately shifted the tone of their recommendations toward favouring consultation with producers; their position is less rigid than the one they took earlier. However, I do not wish to get into an argument about that, since the difference appears to be really one of tone. I have also been impressed by the fact that the rapeseed associations, that is to say, the associations composed of the rapeseed producers themselves, were obviously far less sure than were those other organizations about the issue. I hesitate to say they were against the proposal but the tone of the communications I have received from these associations suggest they welcome the notion of a plebiscite—that they have no real objection to the amendments if a plebiscite among rapeseed producers is clearly part of the legislation, and I have been giving them assurances in that regard.

Mr. Benjamin: I appreciate there are some differences when one considers rapeseed as opposed to rye and, to a lesser degree, flaxseed. Would the minister agree that there might be an argument in favour of bringing one grain at a time under the jurisdiction of the Board? Less difficulty arises in connection with rye than with flaxseed or rapeseed.

Mr. Lang: I would agree that these three grains ought really to be talked about separately because of the possibility that important differences might exist in each case. Certainly, if producers clearly took the view that rye should be placed under the board's jurisdiction, this could happen ahead of the time the other grains were considered.

Mr. Skoberg: Could the minister tell us whether he will be in close consultation with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) who has expressed doubt as to the wisdom of placing all these three grains under the jurisdiction of the Wheat Board. What kind of consultation is he carrying on with the Minister of Agriculture in this regard?

Mr. Lang: There is very close consultation indeed. My colleague is fully in agreement with me that this subject requires further discussion with, and understanding by, producers. On this matter, as is the case in connection

[Mr. Lang.]

with other matters with which he has to deal, he believes the will of the producers with regard to the conduct of what is, essentially, their business, should prevail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the motion agreed to?

Mr. Korchinski: On division.

Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

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[Translation]

POST OFFICE ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING STAMP AGENTS' COMMISSION, LETTER MAIL PREPARATION ARRANGEMENTS, EXTRAORDINARY SERVICES, MEMBERS' MAIL, ETC.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Côté (Minister without Portfolio): moved that Bill C-240, to amend the Post Office Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

He said: In discussing this bill of major importance to the Canada Post Office, I wish to speak first, in general terms, of the present situation. The Post Office finds itself confronted with mounting costs for wages, transportation and materials. Many of its buildings are obsolete, overcrowded and unsuitable. The Post Office deficit reached a new high for the fiscal year just ended. In short, we are faced with formidable problems which are difficult to solve. Hon. members may say that these words are familiar, that they have been said before. It is true, the situation I have outlined is not new to the Canada Post Office or indeed, to any postal administration in the western world. Nevertheless, these conditions must and will be improved.

[English]

In speaking of what is being and will be done, I must first express my appreciation and, I am sure, that of all hon. members, to the more than 50,000 men and women throughout Canada whose efforts provide a postal service which is among the best in the world. We depend upon and need their support and co-operation in coping with the problems we face.

Among the specific problems, one which concerns me greatly is the loss of public confidence the Post Office has experienced in recent years. As I have said before, this confidence must be restored if the Post Office is to be able to continue its vital role in Canadian society. To this end, we are moving to improve services through major reforms.

We have instituted a new approach in our organization, that of decentralizing the administration. This is intended to put responsibility and accountability in the region and districts where the action is. At the head of each of the four regions is a general manager. Headquarters, on the other hand, are now deeply involved in systematic long-range planning. Emphasizing management commitment and contribution to corporate goals, this planning is providing valuable orientation and cohesion to the many operational reforms.