

Deliveries of Grain to Feed Mills

marketing facilities on the prairies in such a way as to undermine and undercut the prices for wheat, oats and barley, without doubt to the detriment of grain producers as a whole.

Some may argue that this will mean lower prices to the feed purchasers. That might be an incidental result, but the purpose of the drive is to make money for the feed manufacturers and not to help anybody engaged in the business of producing grain. Grain producers are in no position to have any policy undertaken which would reduce their total gross income. I will not put myself out of order in this debate, but it is well known to hon. members that the great pressure that has come from western grain producers and farm organizations is for the government to take steps to increase their gross income from grain, not to reduce their income, which this proposal if accepted would accomplish.

For the benefit of hon. members I hasten to say that I am speaking on my responsibility as a member of this house. I have not had any submissions from any grain companies whatsoever. I say categorically that no matter whether one or another of those companies may feel there is something for it to gain in this proposal, the implementation of the proposal will do nothing but damage to the grain producers as a group.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. member whether he is not debating the issue as though it were being decided here. All we are deciding in this motion is whether the matter should be referred to a committee which will be able to hear evidence and report back. I do not want to narrow the debate too much, because one must understand the purpose and what problem is to be referred to the committee. I hope the hon. member will not attempt to settle here the problem which the house is referring to a committee.

Mr. Argue: Obviously I am not settling the question. I do not know whether a committee will settle the question. I take it the committee may or may not make recommendations. If recommendations are made for a change, perhaps it will be necessary to have amendments to the Canadian Wheat Board Act; certainly there would need to be changes in the regulations. The Minister of Trade and Commerce, very properly I think, went over some of the difficulties that have been experienced, according to the submissions that have been presented to him, and I have been merely giving the other side of the case which was presented to the minister, in his own words, by the Canadian feed manufacturers' association in January, 1958.

I have been in the House of Commons for 15 years, and I have taken part in a great

[Mr. Argue.]

many debates regarding the Canadian Wheat Board Act. I was here, Mr. Speaker, at the time oats and barley were removed from the act. We had a long and bitter debate on this subject, and it was finally agreed by the government making the proposals to the house and to the provinces that the Canadian wheat board would have certain jurisdiction over oats and barley. The proposals at that time were fully justified. I do not intend to sit here silently and watch any effort by any group to tear down the great benefit that has come from years of constructive effort in building an orderly marketing system for western grain.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the proposal by the Canadian feed manufacturers' association is a misdirected one. This could be the thin edge of the wedge that begins the destruction of the Canadian wheat board system of marketing grain. I am disturbed at times by people who rise in their places in this house and say, "We believe in free enterprise; we are so much in favour of free enterprise that we do not like to see government control". If there is enough of that attitude followed, then they could open up the grain marketing situation, without any controls whatsoever, with absolutely disastrous results to producers in the three prairie provinces.

There may be pressure coming from outside the three prairie provinces; there may be some who feel that if we can break down the wheat board marketing system within the provinces then we can move in huge transcontinental trucking and freight facilities and take the processed feed which has been chiselled from hard-working farmers at 50 per cent of its value and sell it at bargain prices, and go one step further in undermining the orderly marketing system for coarse grains and feed grains within our country. I make an appeal now, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Trade and Commerce to think very carefully on this question before he recommends to his colleagues any changes in the present policy.

The proposals that are made cannot be construed in any way as a help to the small farmer. I have seen, and members from the prairie provinces have seen, certain farmers from time to time accept lower than market prices for their grain. When that happens almost inevitably it is the wheat farmer, it is the small farmer, it is the farmer least able to accept the cut in his price who is forced by financial circumstances to accept those cut-rate, bargain basement prices. This will be no help to the ordinary grain producer; this will merely damage him.