

*Canadian Wheat Board*

policy. Those two issues are as important to western agricultural people in total, that is, the grain producers and the livestock industry, and as important to the whole of western Canada in their own way as some of those other issues that we think are so important to all of Canada—I am referring to the constitutional issue and even the energy issue. That is the importance that I attach to this double-barrelled controversial issue of domestic feed grain prices plus the Crowsnest Pass freight rates. I know that the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) has been making public statements—and I think the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) has done the same—to indicate that it is his wish to bring to a head in some way this public debate that has been going on now for quite a number of years in western Canada, and very seriously over the last two years, and bring it to the floor of the House of Commons. It remains to be seen, of course, what form it will take. There is a suggestion that it could take the form of a commission that would, shall we say, publicize the suggested policy and ask for input from all concerned. We will take it from there and probably see the government bring in an appropriate piece of legislation. This is not going to happen overnight, of course. It is going to take several years. After all, the problem has been with us now for four generations.

I know my friend from Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) is not happy with what I am saying, but I hope he at least recognizes that I have a personal interest in this and I am very sincere about it.

**Mr. Benjamin:** I am just trying to get you to change your mind.

**Mr. Hargrave:** It is a little late, that is all I can say.

**Mr. Benjamin:** It is never too late.

**Mr. Hargrave:** I want to say that we just cannot possibly envisage the whole grain system in the prairies of western Canada operating without free access to an open feed grains market.

● (1750)

On a related matter I want to draw the attention of this House—this is the first time I have been able to do so although I have raised the matter in the Standing Committee on Agriculture—to what has been termed a joint press release from advisory committees dated at Ottawa, October 23, 1980. It is on the stationery of the Canadian Livestock Feed Board, and I will read briefly from it. This is a statement which followed a joint meeting here in Ottawa at about the time of this release, October 23. No doubt it was a day or two earlier. The two groups which were meeting were the Canadian Livestock Feed Board advisory committee, which is a board appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, and the advisory board to the Canadian Wheat Board, an elected board which is now a very important part of our western grain economy. Those two boards got together here in Ottawa and put out a release which referred three or four times to a unanimous agreement reached by the two boards. The key one is at the bottom of the first page, and I will read it into the record as follows:

Both committees unanimously rejected any system whereby the supply of domestic feed grains would be totally within the domain of the private trade. It was felt that such a system would be detrimental to the interests of both grain and livestock producers throughout Canada.

**Mr. Benjamin:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hargrave:** It is utter rubbish to suggest that those two boards could sit down together and issue a statement saying that they were unanimous. I do not know how the circumstances came about, but immediately afterwards at least four of the members of the advisory board to the Canadian Wheat Board denied very vehemently that there was any substance to this. Two of them are from Manitoba and two are from Alberta, and they were elected representatives. They put out their own statement about it immediately afterward.

At that particular meeting of the two boards two ministers were reported to have been involved in at least part of their deliberations. Those ministers were the Minister of Agriculture and the minister of state responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. Some of us in the Standing Committee on Agriculture did have an opportunity to question the Minister of Agriculture about his involvement.

The issue was raised by three or four of us from this side of the House. The minister denied that he had any specific input into the preparation of this joint press release. He did so rather vigorously, and I would say that those from our side pressed our point equally as vigorously. In the end the minister went on record—when the minutes are finally printed we will find this reference—as saying that the only thing he was dead sure of was that he was for orderly marketing. He repeated that several times. I am saying, I suppose rather tactfully, that the minister was somewhat embarrassed. The Minister of Agriculture was somewhat embarrassed to be involved in a statement on government stationery belonging to the Canadian Livestock Feed Board.

I do not propose to speak much longer, but I want to place on the record the importance of the feeding industry in western Canada. I refer to feed for both cattle and hogs. If I may digress for a moment, I would like to say something about our hog industry, especially in Alberta. It was not too many years ago when the hog industry in Alberta was the largest in Canada by province. We had the largest hog population, and it was a thriving industry.

Then when the higher price for barley and the surplus grain era came along, that hog industry rather suddenly diminished, and at first glance it appeared that it was taken over by the province of Quebec. There is reason for assuming that things happened that way, but in reality we in western Canada lost our large hog industry, especially in Alberta, not to Quebec but to the corn belt in the United States, simply because hogs could be produced cheaper there than here, and there is a better climate there. Of course, we have always known that.

While this was going on, the provincial government of Quebec introduced a rich subsidy program to encourage hog production and feeding in that province. This eventually paid off to the extent that either in the current year almost ending, or next year the largest hog producer in Canada will, I am