

*Canada Grain Bill*

was ready to be passed last session, the producer or grain company could appeal only with regard to the statistics which pertained to the visual characteristics of the grain. The committee said this did not go far enough and that account must be taken of a non-visual criteria such as protein content. I was pleased to see the committee accept this amendment also.

This bill has had unique parliamentary experience, Mr. Speaker. It was first brought in as far back as last February or March. It went to the committee in early June, and politicians were whipped into supporting it by the prospect that were it not supported protein grading could not be implemented immediately and our grain sales would fall off tremendously. In fact, this did not happen. However, this was the prospect held out across the country to politicians and producers, in an attempt to secure passage of a rigid bill which at one time gave powers to the Board of Grain Commissioners to bring about a greater degree of rationalization in the grain handling system as an authoritative body. Protein grading was the carrot.

• (8:40 p.m.)

Politicians were whipped into action to support the bill because we had to have protein grading. Protein grading was needed because sales could not be made on the international market without it. The bill received slow passage, but in spite of that fact sales increased and we were told early in August that we were faced with a substantial movement of grain at the Lakehead and in Vancouver, and everything had to work at capacity or we would not meet our commitments. This only points up the fact that governments are not above attempting to use politics to put forward legislative concepts or ideas in proposed legislation.

One might well ask what was the real intent and purpose of this bill. It certainly was not strictly to implement protein grading or reinstate the Board of Grain Commissioners, because the old bill never expired. This bill was implemented in its initial form for the one reason, to help speed up or bring about an authoritative body to use government powers to expedite the evolution of our grain handling system on the Prairies, with a resulting saving to the railway companies. I say this only after an exhaustive study of the bill and a careful analysis of the evidence of witnesses and the briefs submitted.

Let me quote from a brief presented to the Standing Committee on Agriculture on May 28 by George H. Sellers of the Pacific Elevators Company and the North-West Line Elevators Association. The brief referred to Bill C-196 which was identical in form, except for the last two clauses, to Bill C-175. The brief has these words on the first page:

—Bill C-196 delegates to the Canadian Grain Commission complete authority to determine which community in western Canada will live and which community in western Canada will die.

He was speaking of rural communities and delivery points. The brief continues:

R. J. Shepp, special adviser to the grains group attached to the Honourable Otto Lang, minister responsible for the Canadian

[Mr. Horner.]

Wheat Board, envisaged in a speech in Winnipeg just a few weeks ago that the country elevator system should consist of only 20 to 40 country elevators in place of 1,800 shipping points now in operation on the Prairies.

I cannot emphasize those words too strongly because they spell out the situation. When questioned by members of the committee on this point, a number of government authorities shugged it off and said that a reduction to 20 or 40 was too great and that it probably would be reduced to 100 points. The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) quite gleefully said that some delivery points had to go because there were too many. The hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), who is not in the House tonight, said it stands to reason that a lot of delivery points would disappear. I feel that as a result of evolution, many delivery points will disappear.

As a representative of a rural region, I will not for one minute let 1,800 delivery points be reduced to somewhere between 20 and 40, or even 100. This is ridiculous on the part of bureaucracy. Surely no one representing a part of rural western Canada could buy that theory. This does not matter a hoot to any representative of rural eastern Canada. Many of them just laughed and added whatever contribution they could to the serious study of this bill by the committee.

There is no doubt that in the next few years, perhaps 10 or 20, evolution will reduce the number of delivery points from 1,800 to perhaps 1,000. Western farmers have not forgotten their democratic rights and how to express them. They will not allow any bureaucracy to reduce this number to such an extent. Such a thought is sheer nonsense on the part of the minister piloting this bill and the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. I cannot help remembering the words of the president of the United Grain Growers, who when referring to this bill asked whether it was not an attempt to do things right before it was decided what was the right thing to do. We should request a delay in the passage of this bill, because tonight we are in its final stages and we do not yet know what is right.

There have been a few studies of the grain handling system in western Canada. One was chaired by the president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Another commission was set up by the Canadian Wheat Board under the minister from Saskatoon. Another study was made by Menzies, who gathered together some of the world's experts on wheat handling as well as some importers from Europe and representatives of export agencies in Canada. These authorities are to advise the government what the Canadian Wheat Board should be doing, how it should be changed and how Canadian producers should be marketing and handling grain. I understand their proposals will be submitted to the minister early in the new year, yet we are tonight considering passage of this bill before having an opportunity to receive the views of these people who have made an exhaustive study of the grain handling situation. The Standing Committee on Agriculture has seriously studied this bill but has been denied the advice of these experts. Are we not really putting the cart before the horse? One can only assume that we are doing just that.