

Wheat Sales

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION—
ALLEGED GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN OPERATIONS
OF WHEAT BOARD AND REQUEST FOR INCREASE IN
PAYMENTS**Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot)** moved:

This House condemns the government and the Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board for failing to maximize wheat sales at top world prices and for otherwise failing to permit the Board to operate in a positive and efficient manner in the best interest of the Canadian wheat farmer; and this House deplors the government's failure to announce through the Board an immediate payment of 30 cents a bushel on all wheat sold in the 1972-73 crop year.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the motion before the House breaks down into two parts, as can readily be seen. The first condemns the government and the minister responsible for the Wheat Board for interfering in the operations of the Board to the detriment of the Canadian farmer, and the western farmer in particular. The second part calls for an immediate increase in the price of wheat paid by the Board.

To deal with the first part, I have sat in this House and watched six ministers report to parliament for the Wheat Board over the last 15 years. Each of them did it a little differently, but all of them did it in a manner different from that of the present minister. The present minister attempts to control and run the Canadian Wheat Board to his own personal advantage and to the advantage of the political party to which he belongs. The Canadian Wheat Board was established to serve the western farmer in the areas designated. The cost of the administration and operations of the Board is paid for by the farmers themselves. Salaries and administration costs come out of money received for grain handled by the Board. The minister's job is to report to the House, but he has repeatedly attempted to interfere with the Board's operations.

In the short time available to me this afternoon I shall attempt to show how he has done this. First, on taking over responsibility for the Wheat Board, he devised a system whereby deliveries would be low so that the elevators could be emptied. Then, during the coming election, whenever it came up, it would be possible to fill the elevators and create a feeling of ebullience across the prairies as grain was being delivered.

● (1520)

The minister sold over 300 million bushels on international markets that year but allowed the farmers to deliver only 200 million bushels. This resulted in a direct loss to the farmers, forcing many of them out of business. I know that the minister will attempt to say that he devised the block system. Actually he did not; the block system was devised before he took over by the railroads and the Canadian Wheat Board. Then, many programs were instituted. After the block system we had Operation Lift, with the domestic price frozen at \$1.95 a bushel. Then, we had an acreage payment and grain stabilization plan, but this did not go forward. Then, there was the acreage payment plan for the seeding of grasslands, and the minis-

[Mr. Speaker.]

ter also took a hand in making sales of wheat to Russia and China last summer.

One wonders where all these programs came from. Were they devised by the Canadian Wheat Board, or were they thoughts put forward by the western farmers? Sadly, Mr. Speaker, they were not. If you refer to the task force report on agriculture in the 1970's, among the recommendations appearing at pages 130 to 132 of the report, each one of these programs is suggested. Who were the people who constituted the task force? Of the five members of the task force on agriculture, only one was a westerner. Three came from Ontario, one from Quebec, and the fifth was a university professor in the city of Winnipeg.

How does this minister's handling of the Canadian Wheat Board compare with that of previous ministers? The present Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) at one time had responsibility for the Canadian Wheat Board and reported to parliament on their behalf. As reported at page 1333 of *Hansard* for February 16, 1966 he said:

—I hope that all hon. members will support the Wheat Board in their endeavours to sell as much Canadian grain as possible. I hope they will never be criticized for their endeavours to find markets for our grain.

The minister stated quite clearly that it was the Canadian Wheat Board that sold our grain.

During the last election we were told that the present minister in charge of the Wheat Board is the best grain salesman that Canada has ever had.

Mr. Sharp: Did Alvin sell any wheat?

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): When Mr. Pepin was in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, he said that western farmers are used to making their own decisions. Then, he said he understood there would be a reduction of 12 per cent in wheat acreage in the coming year. That is what he said in 1969, but he quite clearly stated that the western farmers ought to make their own decisions.

During another debate in this House on May 16, 1969 Mr. Pepin said, as reported at page 8818:

With regard to having a representative of the Wheat Board in China, this would be a matter of Canadian Wheat Board policy and in due course we will see what it is.

There, again, he left it up to the Canadian Wheat Board to make their own decision, since they are operating for the good of the farmers.

The Hon. Robert Winters used to report for the Canadian Wheat Board in this House, and this is what he said about the Wheat Board as reported at page 11,749 of *Hansard* for Friday, January 13, 1967:

I would like to pay particular tribute to the remarkable achievements of the Canadian Wheat Board. The efforts of the board on behalf of the western producer have benefited not only the grain producer but all Canadians.

So, Mr. Speaker, all previous ministers responsible for the Wheat Board have emphasized that the western producer should be served by the Canadian Wheat Board, not interfered with by programs such as Operation Lift and others. The present minister has stated quite clearly that he is in charge. When talking about the freeze on the domestic price of wheat, as reported at page 21:13 of the