

Canada Grain Bill

kets. Why should we go out of our way to write into this bill a completely new clause to strengthen the negotiating hands of 200 people who could, in some circumstances, tie up the incomes of 200,000 producers, as they did two years ago for a period of 26 weeks? In all fairness to the people I represent, I cannot allow this bill to be passed without putting the onus squarely on the government if they fail to remove this clause.

It is a clause whose effect will be to aid the unions at the bargaining table. This has been done deliberately. Just as sure as can be, there will be difficulty in the years ahead in settling grain handling problems at the Lakehead and at Vancouver; as sure as guns there will be difficulty, and this clause, if passed, will contribute to that difficulty, because no one can say he is serving the agriculture industry by strengthening the hands of the unions at the bargaining table. To my mind, this is a basic issue and I urge all members to take it very seriously before they vote on my amendment. For my part, I shall do my utmost to bring the matter fully to the attention of the farmers the next time we run into grain handling problems either at the Lakehead or at Vancouver. The farmers will want to know who assisted whom. All members should weigh this issue carefully before they vote on the amendment, because we can be sure that negotiating problems will develop in the years ahead.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): I wish to speak only briefly on the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) calling for the deletion of Clause 41. This particular amendment has been moved on two occasions in the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and has been defeated on both.

The argument which is advanced about strengthening or weakening one side or another as far as labour negotiations are concerned is not a valid one in my view.

Mr. Horner: The grain companies think so.

Mr. Olson: Yes, I know. If I owned a grain company I would like to collect the full storage charges from the farmers while elevators were shut down, but in my view it is not fair for farmers to have to pay full storage charges during periods when there is a major stoppage, because farmers have the right, by reason of the grain tickets they hold, to have access to that grain, and to have it delivered into a vessel or into any other means of transportation, when it is called upon.

So the reason for the inclusion of clause 41 in the Canada Grain Act is clear. It provides authority for the Board of Grain Commissioners to set a special maximum storage charge for grain held in an elevator when the licensee is unable to deliver the grain because of the condition of the elevator or because the employees are not working—in other words, when the elevator is not operating. This clause makes it plain that the regular storage charges can continue for seven days but that afterward a special storage charge shall apply, and that this lower charge may be set for specific periods of time after the first seven days.

[Mr. Horner.]

In addition, subclause (3) of clause 41 specifies that to make this new charge operative, the regulations must prescribe it in advance. This is so that everyone, including the farmers who have grain stored in these elevators, is in a position to know in advance what the charges will be in the event of a work stoppage for any of a number of reasons.

I wish to be as conciliatory as I can, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me this is a perfectly logical clause. In my view the charge should not be applicable in full during a period when grain is not available for delivery on request, for example, from those people who act on behalf of the farmers holding warehouse receipts. I do not think holders of warehouse receipts should be called upon to pay full charges when their grain is not available to them. This is, essentially, the reason for the inclusion of clause 41. If an elevator is not operating, because of a labour stoppage, obviously the cost of running that elevator is significantly reduced. This is another argument in favour of my contention that it is not reasonable to continue charges at the full level. I might add that the commission is responsible for determining the approximate maxima.

• (4:10 p.m.)

As required by clause 80 of this bill, the commission is obliged to hold public hearings on such a tariff if it is requested by the licensee, and in this case the licensee would be the owners and operators of the terminal elevators. I hope the House will not accept this amendment on the basis of the arguments which I have just made because I do not believe it is fair to ask the farmers to pay full storage charges under such conditions as I have mentioned. That is what clause 41 is about and I want to completely reject, as kindly as I can, the interpretation the hon. member put on certain comments I made as long ago as a year and a half and again a few weeks ago.

I said that management, during the first four or five weeks of the strike at the lakehead in the fall of 1968, had not made a reasonable offer to the labour unions. That was not a \$1 an hour increase. They offered 42 cents an hour during the first four weeks, which both labour and management knew was an unreasonable offer in relation to what they had already settled for at the Vancouver terminals. The hon. member is putting a completely distorted construction on what I said. While I do not want to argue with him this afternoon, I do not think his remarks ought to stay on the record unchallenged. We can argue this across the country, and no doubt we will, from time to time, in the next couple of years.

In conclusion, the application of clause 41 does not change the relative position of management vis-à-vis labour. What it does do is create an element of justice on behalf of farmers who have grain stored in these elevators in that they will not pay the full storage charges while some other parties are involved in a dispute.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a brief comment. As a farmer, I quite naturally cannot be in favour of any strike which