

*Maintenance of Ports Operations Act, 1986*

are some of the market realities we must keep in mind as we consider the necessity of the Bill before us.

The West Coast ports exported approximately 12.2 million tonnes of grain in the 1985-86 crop year. The volume of grain which passed through the ports in this period represents a significant improvement of approximately 15 per cent over the volume exported from the West Coast in the previous crop year. While the level of grain exports in 1985-86 was below the previous record for the West Coast of 12.5 million tonnes reached in 1983-84, it was only marginally lower, and this gives us an indication of the solid performance in the industry in the past year. It should also be noted that grain exports from the West Coast have more than doubled the levels of only a decade ago. This gives us an indication of the progress that has been made over the years in expanding our capacity to handle the continuing growth in grain production.

I should also mention the significant role of the new, highly automated terminal grain elevator facilities at Prince Rupert, and especially the fact that almost a quarter of the increase in West Coast grain exports in the past year has been derived from the increased throughput of the new facilities at Prince Rupert. I might also add that as a member of the Transport Committee I was privileged to see that terminal firsthand. It was built by a consortium of grain-handling companies from the Prairies, including Cargill, the United Grain Growers, Pioneer Grain, and the Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta Wheat Pools which, along with the Province of Alberta, formed a consortium and provided the ownership of that world class facility.

The significance of the West Coast ports to the ability of western Canada's grain producers to ship their crops to international markets is widely appreciated. However, it is worth reminding ourselves of the pre-eminent role Canada plays in the world's grain markets and of the fact that our total grain production gives Canada a rank of sixth place among the largest grain-producing countries in the world. This comparison takes into account the huge land masses of China, the U.S.S.R. and the United States. Wheat accounts for approximately one-half of Canada's total grain production and is our single most important grain commodity. Not all of the countries mentioned are exporters of wheat and it is in wheat exports that Canada ranks second in importance as a source of this valuable food commodity. Canada ranks second only to the United States in wheat exports, and it is this significant fact which gives an indication of the extent to which the rest of the world depends on us as a reliable supplier of this commodity which is so vital to world grain consumption. Seen in this perspective, Canada's role in the international grain trade and the actions we take to ensure its continuation must be viewed as of vital importance to the many nations that rely on us.

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The 23.7 million tonnes of grain we exported last year was the product of many thousands of grain-producing farms which rely upon a complex infrastructure of trucking, rail and

shipping modes which constitute the grain industry's transportation system, and a vast elevator network which performs the essential functions of storage, inspection and weighing of grain, the cleaning and treating of grain and the transfer of grain forward. Prairie grain is processed through a network of some 2,000 primary elevators licensed by the Canadian Grain Commission to receive grain for storage and forwarding. This elevator network is linked by the Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railways to Thunder Bay and to the six terminal elevators in Vancouver and Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

The terminal elevators on the West Coast have a combined licensed capacity of approximately 1.1 million tonnes of grain. Of the 23.7 million tonnes of grain Canada exported in the 1985-86 crop year, 12.2 million tonnes, or approximately one-half of total grain exports, were cleared through the West Coast terminal elevators where the grain is weighed, cleaned and stored before being loaded into ships docked next to the elevators. The longshoremen have the important task of directing the huge spouts through which the grain flows to the appropriate hold in the ship, and of trimming or levelling the grain as it enters the ship. The longshoremen are dispatched by the B.C. maritime employers to the docks to perform this essential function as the final and critical step in the transfer of grain before ships embark for their specific destinations, the largest of which are the U.S.S.R., China and Japan. Other important markets served through the Pacific Coast are South Korea, Egypt, Taiwan, Peru, Brazil, Venezuela and Colombia.

It is the abrupt halting of this critical function performed by longshoremen in Vancouver and Prince Rupert in loading grain into ships that threatens to disrupt the flow of grain. It is paramount that Parliament act expeditiously to pass this Bill and have the West Coast ports resume operations without delay. I might add that the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) ably stated the fact that it is not the longshoremen who have withheld their services but that the ports have been closed down. So not just has the handling of grain been affected but the whole operation of the ports of British Columbia has been affected.

The Minister of Labour has provided Members of the House with a detailed perspective on the issues and on the opportunities the parties have had to resolve their differences in this dispute through direct bargaining through the conciliation officer, the Conciliation Commissioner and mediation assistance. The Minister has also pointed out the record of collective bargaining disputes in the West Coast longshoring industry and the fact that since 1970 legislation has been required to terminate work stoppages on the docks on three previous occasions. That is not a very good record for us to look back upon. Consequently, it has required the intervention of the Minister today.

If there were some reasonable grounds for optimism in the belief that the parties could resolve this dispute without inflicting harm on those who depend on the ports for their livelihood, I am sure we would be dealing with other pressing