

Mr. STEVENS: This bill is one of the most important measures before the Parliament of Canada and it deserves our closest study and the most impartial consideration. It applies not only to the producer of grain but to the system of elevators, which really are, in a sense, common carriers; also to the buying, selling and milling of grain. It affects all these interests, and particularly it affects the producer. A revision of the act is due, as I think all will agree. The act as it stands no doubt served a very good purpose, but conditions in Canada with respect to the marketing of grain have outgrown, during the last few years, the provisions of the present law.

While you have ruled, Mr. Chairman, that the introduction of this legislation by resolution comes within the rules of parliament, the method employed does handicap us in discussing the matter at this stage—and I am not saying this in any spirit of criticism. I approach this bill after years of study of the problem, with an open mind and a desire to co-operate with other hon. members in the enactment of legislation that will meet the growing needs of this vast business known as the grain trade. But I say we are handicapped in discussing the matter at this stage. Indeed, I would be willing to let the resolution pass and say not a word except for this: that the bill will go immediately to a committee of which I am not a member—of which, indeed, only a limited number of hon. gentlemen are members; consequently we cannot have much opportunity to discuss the bill until it comes back from that committee. That is one reason why I had hoped that we should have an opportunity at this stage to discuss the general provisions of the legislation. For instance, if the minister had stated that he was going to treat the question of screenings along some general line we could have had a very useful discussion on that phase of it. Then, there is the question of grading. If it were revealed to us at this stage what the government intended to do, a useful discussion might follow which would guide hon. members who are fortunate enough to be on the committee. I would therefore at this stage crave the indulgence of the committee for a few minutes while I very briefly discuss one or two phases of the question. I want the minister and the government to understand that I am not attacking anything, because there is nothing before us to attack. What I say now I offer merely because I shall have no other opportunity of doing so until the bill comes back from the Agriculture committee.

[Mr. Low.]

Take the question of screenings. For the last seven years at least in this House I have contended with all the vigour of which I am capable that the producer of the grain is entitled to the full value of the screenings that are taken out of his grain when it passes through the elevator. With very few exceptions the producer and owner of the grain has not received anything like the full value of his screenings. In other words—and I do not like to use the word “rob” carelessly, but I can find no other to meet the case—he has been systematically robbed of his screenings. I told hon. members of the House in 1919 when we were discussing the Grain Act, at the time the House was sitting in the Museum—and the famous Price, Waterhouse audit of that time disclosed beyond any possibility of cavil that the case was as I stated it—that the farmer was not getting the value of his screenings at all; in fact, in most cases he was not even getting a slip accounting for any of it. It is possible—and I ask the Agriculture committee to consider this, because I shall not have the privilege of being on that committee—to give to the farmer or producer the full value of his screenings. That was demonstrated for one year—and only for one year, I am very sorry to say—in the government elevator at Vancouver. For some unknown reason they have abandoned the system and this year have adopted the method followed in other places, that of recleaning the screenings. Now, suppose a car of grain is brought to a terminal elevator and is put through the cleaning machine. Out of that grain is taken certain refuse, cracked and broken grain, dirt, and so on; or, if it is wheat, there is removed from it oats or other grain seeds. These screenings are the property of the vendor and he ought to get the full benefit of them. The practice is to run the first screenings through the “money making machines,” as they are called; extract from them all the valuable feed seeds, and then say to the farmer or the shipper: “Here is a certificate; you can have the remainder,”—which is nothing but refuse screenings and in most cases worthless. In fact, hundreds of thousands of tons of this material have been dumped into the lake or burned up or sold for next to nothing. The original screenings, on the other hand, is a very valuable product. So I say that in this revision of the act steps should be taken to provide that the shipper of the grain shall receive the full value of his screenings.

Then, there is the question of overages. I venture to say that it will be shown by the annual report of the grain commission