

To my amazement I found that 43 eastern and western exporting firms are acting as agents of the Canadian Wheat Board and handling Canadian grain sales abroad. I suggest that if these exporting firms are acting as Canadian agents, and at the same time as agents for other countries, Canadian producers can expect no consideration in so far as the handling of Canadian grain is concerned.

● (10:00 p.m.)

There are some supposedly responsible people—we have them in Saskatchewan—who deliberately attack the Canadian Wheat Board for not doing a proper job. Does the minister not think that if we set up permanent Canadian missions abroad to sell our agricultural products, under the control of the Canadian Wheat Board, giving that board the tools to do the job, instead of letting these 43 eastern and western exporting and shipping firms handle our produce, we would have better selling machinery?

We know that certain private entrepreneurs would love to see the Canadian Wheat Board broken. We know that certain stockbrokers would like to see the Canadian Wheat Board broken. At the same time we know that the Canadian people, particularly those engaged in the agricultural industry, would like to see selling missions permanently established throughout the world to sell our produce. Such selling missions would look after the sale of Canadian produce alone; they would not attempt to handle everybody's produce at the same time.

I am given to understand that some of these 43 exporting firms also have interests in shipping firms. No one has to draw a map to realize that if they have interests in shipping firms, and at the same time are trying to sell agricultural produce, they will try to sell that produce from the country in which their ships are located at any given time. It is important that we look into this situation now. If we are to have credible grain selling Canadian missions, we must establish them under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board. This is something Canada must decide today, not tomorrow. We cannot wait for the Canada Grains Council or any other board to carry out a further examination.

I am pleased to note that the Alberta Wheat Pool has come up with an excellent suggestion, one which I wish to read into the record. In a statement dated April 16, 1970, it says:

While existing agencies have achieved commendable results in selling its products, Canadian agriculture is ready for a yet more aggressive

marketing attitude on the part of all those responsible for handling and selling its products. Techniques now being used by competing nations, and marketing procedures not now in effect must be explored and developed if Canada is to maintain any success in the world's agricultural marketplace.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister that unless Canada establishes permanent selling missions throughout the world, our agricultural economy is due for a complete bust. We simply cannot have 43 exporting and shipping firms trying to handle our produce. Unless the government realizes this, it will stand accused forever and a day. Our producers know what is going on. They do not really expect these 43 exporting firms to handle their produce properly. I plead with the minister to give serious consideration to the suggestion that we establish these permanent marketing agencies throughout the world, otherwise our agricultural economy will suffer complete collapse in the very near future.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture):

Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member asked this question a few days ago, part of the question, as I then understood it, was with respect to the response we had given to the Canadian Grains Council in respect of its declared purpose in promoting sales of Canadian grain in the international market. It seems to me there are a lot of contradictions in the hon. member's assertions respecting the best interests of the producer in selling the largest volume of grain on the international market. It certainly does not seem to me that we would enhance our position by withdrawing our offer to sell to all the international agencies because that, in my opinion, is certainly not in conflict with the sales promotions that the Canadian Wheat Board has carried on so effectively over the years. Certainly we are the first to admit that they have the same difficulties as every other country when we run into a situation such as the present one where supplies are excessive in relation to the immediate market demand.

I believe there are some encouraging signs, however, and I would not agree with the hon. member that it would enhance our situation, or the position of the Canadian Wheat Board, to stop selling through all the international agencies who would be willing to take large or small quantities from time to time. It seems to me that they can be complementary. Some action is being taken by XCAN, a collaboration among the various wheat pools and producer organizations in western Canada, in