

*Canada Grain Act*

tribution made by my hon. friend from Essex South (Mr. Whelan). I also enjoyed the contribution made by the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Horner) whose talents I have always admired. I must say he was lacking something in fire and volume this afternoon, but I think it was very considerate of him, especially on a Friday afternoon when the house has some difficulty in maintaining its numbers, to choose to assist us. I can well recall his contributions to our debates on previous occasions and I will always remember his speech in this chamber during the flag debate, along with that of the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Dupuis).

The difficulty which this bill was designed to cover is the problem which will arise with respect to elevators along railway lines which will be abandoned. My hon. friend from Essex South made a good point when he said we had to think of a desirable volume in a country elevator system in relation to an expected volume of export business. We must realize that the whole purpose is to keep our system of grain marketing competitive, and in order to do this we must see that the storage facilities are situated at points where there are no unnecessary additional trucking or related charges—points where the grain can be turned over properly and where the marketing board can maintain proper control. They must be close to transportation facilities and so on.

It seems to me there is a major line of criticism which could be directed at the bill before us. Basically, as I have suggested, a bill of this nature serves an educational purpose; it calls a problem to our attention and offers a possible solution. The difficulties which may still exist can then be examined in the course of public debate, and possibly some other line of attack on the problem can be found.

The concern I had on reading this bill arises from the definition of "elevator". The definition presently reads as follows:

"elevator" means any premises into which western grain may be received, or out of which it may be discharged directly from or into railway cars or vessels—

It seems to me by eliminating the phrase "directly from or into railway cars or vessels" one leaves the definition very loose indeed. The possibility of using any type of storage space is opened up, whether it be an abandoned aircraft hangar, an abandoned community skating rink or storage space in general—space which may not be a desirable location for the storage of grain.

[Mr. Francis.]

I am told, although this is a field with which I am not as familiar as I should like to be, that grain in storage has to be turned over regularly, that we cannot be haphazard about these things and that control over conditions of storage is most important, especially when grain is intended for export. There is no doubt that the elevators system has to be examined. Canada must develop the most effective facilities in order that our export business may be conducted with the minimum delay and the maximum efficiency. Any amendment to the legislation which would have the effect of worsening our storage facilities by creating too loose a definition should not be undertaken lightly by this house, especially if it were likely to remove some of the tools now at the disposal of the marketing board for controlling the quality and nature of our storage facilities.

I think the fate of a measure of this kind should be as follows. The question is a large one and it deserves the attention of more hon. members than are present this afternoon. It should be up for debate again, at which time there might possibly be a correction in the definition which would meet the deficiencies which have been pointed out in the course of this debate.

The hon. member could introduce it again. By the force of compelling public debate which has brought attention to the problem an examination will take place, not only in this house and the press of the land but among those who examine public problems and try to resolve them in the most satisfactory manner. Attention will also be focused upon it within the department. Certainly the problem is there. We are going to undertake a program of abandonment of certain branch lines in the process of the rationalization of our railway system in western Canada. Legislation in this respect has been placed in general form before the house and it will be discussed and debated at great length. The final impact of the program is not yet clear.

When we have taken that step we shall have to look at the elevators program at the same time. I think the hon. member who moved the bill has shown commendable foresight in calling attention to the problem, doing so in a timely way and according to the established procedures of the house. I think it illustrates the proper use of private members' hour. I know the hon. member who moved the bill is a little more sophisticated and knowledgeable than some hon. members