

Feed Grains

I just want to say a brief word or two about the protein feed situation. Although there have been recent restrictions in both the United States and Canada, it seems to me that there were very obvious signs last fall of this serious impending protein shortage. The excessive rain, snow, mud and mild winter conditions made it very obvious that there would be a crop failure of soybeans in both countries. Steps could have been and should have been taken in the late fall of last year to protect our supplies and sources of supply for high protein feeds. In particular, Canada should have taken very special steps to safeguard our soybean supplies through some form of preferred agreement with the United States. Canada should also have taken steps, when these bad harvest conditions were known, to encourage and increase our own protein meal production all across the country.

Until the formal policy on feed grains is announced, it is very difficult to be more specific as to details in this important debate. However, before concluding these remarks let me remind all hon. members in this House of this very important fact of farm life: in terms of dollars, farmers in Canada sell nearly three times as much in the form of livestock products as they do in the form of grain. Put another way, the feeder industry in Canada, of which the beef cattle industry is easily the largest, about \$1.2 billion at the farm gate per year, represents the largest customer by far of Canada's total feed grain production, including our export market.

As the largest customer, our Canadian cattle industry is vitally concerned in this issue. We fully expect and indeed feel that it is reasonable to demand full involvement in the ultimate resolution of this feed grains issue.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would remind this House that the Canadian Cattlemen's Association—and I believe all livestock producers in general—want to see the continuation of the Canadian Wheat Board as the principal export agency for wheat and all feed grains that are surplus to our domestic requirements. Our domestic feed grain production and marketing is easily the most important part of our Canadian cereal-cropping industry today, and the future of our domestic feed grains industry rests with Canada's livestock industry, especially cattle.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to add a few comments to this debate because it is important to people right across this country. No individual member who has any rural part of Canada in his riding can feel otherwise.

The minister in charge of the Wheat Board cannot understand why the fear, why the rumours, why the uneasiness about the issue of feed grains and orderly marketing and the problems we are facing with protein imports and domestic protein supplies. There are a number of reasons for this, Mr. Speaker, not the least of which is the fact that the record of the minister over the last several years causes farmers to be fearful. The minister still has not learned and cannot understand why farmers are uneasy and fearful about the health and welfare of the Canadian Wheat Board and orderly marketing in general since he has been around.

I can illustrate why they continue to have their fear from something the minister said in Winnipeg about three

[Mr. Hargrave.]

Fridays ago. Talking about his infamous stabilization bill, he said:

● (Midnight)

I was practically forced to drop the Stabilization Bill, not through the honest disagreement from farm organizations, but through the mischievous actions of opposition politicians.

The minister said two things: first, that there was no honest disagreement from farm organizations, which I submit is not correct; secondly, that there were mischievous actions on the part of opposition politicians.

The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Alberta Wheat Pool, Manitoba Wheat Pool, the United Grain Growers, the three provincial Federations of Agriculture, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, even the Palliser Wheat Growers and the three prairie governments, were all united in opposing the grain stabilization bill. When the minister makes a statement like that one can only assume that he has not learned, that he has not listened to those farm organizations, and they know it. Until those farm organizations see action on the part of the government to convince them otherwise, they will remain fearful and uneasy, especially as the people in the minister's department, and in the Department of Agriculture, keep flying trial balloons to see what kind of reaction there will be in the country to a policy of removing feed grains from the jurisdiction of the Wheat Board, domestically or otherwise.

The other thing that makes them uneasy and fearful is this marvellous ability of the Liberal party to be so disorganized as to have two ministers doing the same thing at opposite ends of the country. Each minister seems to pretend that he is the one who ought to make the important announcements. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), who has not found it convenient to remain for this part of the debate, has wired the ministers of agriculture of the provinces across Canada telling them not to worry and that he will discuss feed grain policies with them in Charlottetown on July 24; and, by golly, the minister in charge of the Wheat Board has told the four western ministers of agriculture and the four western premiers not to worry. He sent a telegram saying, "We will discuss this with you in Calgary on July 24."

What is he discussing, with whom, and who is to do what to whom, either in Charlottetown or Calgary? Really, somebody ought to tell the Minister of Agriculture that perhaps he had better cancel the Charlottetown meeting of July 24, because I know of at least one minister of agriculture who is not going to be there, and I would not be a bit surprised if at least four ministers of agriculture are not in Charlottetown on July 24.

Mr. Lang: Why not?

Mr. Benjamin: Because there is a meeting in Calgary on July 24, that is why. I would be surprised if the four western ministers of agriculture show up at Charlottetown. There seems to be evidence of true organizational confusion, as the minister in charge of the Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture are to have meetings on the same date 3,000 miles apart.

One of the subjects for discussion is to be agriculture and feed grains. This is amazing. Who is kidding whom?