

Canadian Wheat Board Act (No. 2)

an amendment through the House to do that. And so I would be inclined, in the spirit of the day, to go along with that particular change.

Unfortunately, on that date 12 government members attended the committee meeting. Not one of those 12 members from the government side represented a constituency in the Canadian Wheat Board area. With all due respect, I suggest that the members who were there and who do not represent a constituency in the Canadian Wheat Board area do not understand the function and the purpose of the Canadian Wheat Board. In fact the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Marchand) in speaking on my amendment, as recorded at page 89:33 of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of Tuesday May 18 had this to say:

Another concern that I have is that on a number of these government boards, producer boards and so on, I think there is a real place for consumers.

Then, he went on to say:

I think that on these government boards, producer boards, there should be a consumer interest in there or a consumer point of view, and I feel very strongly about that.

As I mentioned earlier the sole function of the Canadian Wheat Board is to sell grain on the export market. There is no place on the advisory committee for consumer representation. The consumers of Canada have been taken care of by a bill passed about a year or two ago which had to do with the two-price system for wheat. That was a government bill which now is law. It is separate and apart from any of the operations of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is interesting to note that in committee, notwithstanding the comments of the minister to the effect that he would accept the amendment, the 12 government members chose to vote against the amendment. As I said not one of those 12 government members represented a constituency in the Canadian Wheat Board area.

It is interesting to note, on the other hand, that there were 10 members of the Conservative Party present as members of the committee. Of those 10 members eight represented the Canadian Wheat Board area. They represented constituencies within the area. Two others who were outside the Canadian Wheat Board area were farmers. Of the eight members who represented constituencies in the Canadian Wheat Board area every one was the holder of a permit book from the Canadian Wheat Board, either under suffix A or suffix B.

A few minutes ago I quoted the minister as saying in committee that he would accept the amendment. I think it is unfortunate there was a misunderstanding on the part of the government members who were sitting on that committee and who voted against the wishes of the minister. This is an important amendment. It is important to the producers in western Canada. I would ask, under the circumstances, that the members on the other side of the House reconsider their position and vote in favour of this amendment today.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to support the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) in respect of his amendment. I think he put forward excellent arguments concerning why we should support this amendment and why we should consider that only actual farmers be allowed to represent their constituencies in western Canada on the Canadian Wheat Board.

[Mr. Neil.]

To start with, I think there is no better way to find support for the amendment than to read the words of the minister who in a sense totally supported this amendment when he stated in the committee as recorded at page 87:10 of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence:

It is a question really of having people that are farmers and, I think, clear sight of the Wheat Board being in touch directly with some farmers about problems that concern them. We all know how easy it is to forget the obvious if you are not dealing with the problem daily as the farmer is. In that sense, having practical men and women who are chosen by the farmers to be there and to draw their attention to how the farmers will be affected by something the Wheat Board is doing, I think, is just very, very useful.

I agree entirely with that statement. I think it is necessary that only producers of actual grains in the Canadian Wheat Board area be allowed to sit on this board. There are some problems at present because men or women who are members of farm organizations, and who spend their entire time as leaders of these organizations, now are eligible for election to this board. In the last election some of them were elected. While these people do an excellent job in their positions—I have no doubt of this—it would seem to me that they also are very busy in their principal occupation of being the leader of a farm organization. Although at the present time the advisory board meets 3, 4 or 5 times a year, or perhaps more often, I think in the future the Wheat Board intends to ask for its advice more often.

The Canadian Wheat Board and the Governor in Council are prepared to give these people some money in order that they may go to the areas from which they were elected and set up meetings at which they can ask the farmers, their constituents, how they feel and what advice they can give which might be passed on to the Canadian Wheat Board. Mr. Vogel of the Canadian Wheat Board stated his intention to have this advisory board meet more often. He mentioned 10 or 12 times a year. It seems to me it would be a very good idea if these people were not leaders of farm organizations but rather actual producers who are involved in the day-to-day workings of the farm in the production of grains. We could take the example of a member of parliament who really is not a professional in certain fields but when elected is asked by his constituents to become knowledgeable in a number of areas. We sit on committees and the experts in the various departments come forward to give us various examples of how legislation should be changed and why it should be changed. We as laymen, sit on the committees and attempt to pick out from this mass of information the logical things that we think would be of use to our constituents and should be in the legislation. Therefore, it seems to me that a producer would be able to do the same for his constituents or for the farmers in his area if he sat on the advisory board advising the Wheat Board commissioners on how they should sell grain or give advice to farmers in the production areas.

● (1120)

An example was brought forward to me recently which I think points out the necessity of having producers on the advisory board. The Wheat Board has encouraged the farmers in western Canada to produce hard spring wheat year after year, yet it is well known by the farmers that there is a market for some of the soft wheats and that our hard spring wheats are bought by other countries and mixed with lesser quality wheats to produce a form of