

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. JUTRAS: Mr. Speaker, just before six o'clock I was attempting to prove two points. The first was that this demand for a marketing agency such as the wheat board, to market wheat more particularly and also coarse grains, was a demand which had grown constantly and persistently over the last thirty-five years. A further point was that this demand is not the result of prejudice but rather the result of more generous financial returns through the board than through any other agency throughout that period of time.

At six o'clock I had reached, in the analysis of the various years, the years 1939 and 1940; and I showed that the board, before the crop year 1939-1940, was able to pay out six cents more than the average market price. In 1940-1941 the board again marketed most of the wheat, although it was on a voluntary basis, and was able to pay two cents more than the average price. Again in the crop year 1941-1942 the board marketed 44 per cent of the crop of wheat and the trade 56 per cent of that crop. For that year the board paid a minimum price of 85 cents, while the average market price was 76 cents, and therefore the average price was nine cents over the average market price. In 1942-1943 the board marketed 68 per cent and paid out \$1.02 a bushel, with a participation certificate, as against an average price on the market of 94 cents, which means that the board was able to pay eight cents more than the average price on the market.

In that, I believe, lies more or less the reason for this demand in favour of the board. I think it can be said that at the present time there is probably 100 per cent of agreement among farmers for a wheat board, not necessarily a monopoly board, but for a board to handle wheat. I have not seen any resolution contrary to that.

We come now to the year 1943-1944. During that year we returned to a monopoly board. However, I wish to point out that a drastic and fundamental change took place in the wheat board in 1943. On September 27, 1943, the government itself assumed the primary responsibility in connection with wheat and the price and condition of sale. These three became directly subject to government policy. Furthermore, during the war, the wheat board acted more or less as agent of the wartime prices and trade board. In other words, it carried out many functions for the wartime prices and trade board. I would say

here that the sooner the board is relieved of these duties and removed entirely from them, the better.

So that actually this demand, if it is not the demand of an over-all majority, is neither the demand of just a few. This demand is not merely the result of prejudice but the result of better returns which the board was able to show. However, there have been many changes in the board since the first board that was set up in 1917. Therefore it is important, I believe, that the extension of the powers of the wheat board today to include coarse grains, oats and barley, should be viewed in the light of the wheat board as it is at the present time. I do not think we can say that we have yet received a conclusive expression of opinion from the various groups in western Canada on the inclusion of coarse grains in the wheat board as it exists today.

I have noticed, from resolutions, letters and telegrams, that a great many think of the wheat board as it was in 1935, and a great many think of the wheat board as the agent of a price-setting agency. There are others who think of the wheat board as it is today, and that is indicated in a great many resolutions. Therefore I do not think that at the present time we really have any definite or conclusive expression of opinion on this subject.

For myself, I wish to make it quite clear that I consider it most important that, whatever is done, the wheat board, which has always been known as and, in fact, always has been the marketing agent of the western farmer for his wheat, should retain that characteristic, no matter what happens. For that reason I think the best thing to do at the present time would be to give an opportunity to all groups, co-operatives, pools, farmers' organizations and the trade, to discuss this question in the light of present circumstances. I think it would be the logical thing to refer the whole matter to a committee here, so that all these people would have an opportunity to express their views on the subject. The reason, as I have said, is that the board has gone through many transformations over the last thirty years.

I do not propose to add very much to that, except to say that I think the government is wise in submitting the bill now and proceeding in the way it is doing. I am sure that everyone will have to agree that, no matter how we look at it, it is the most democratic way in which the subject can possibly be dealt with under present circumstances.

Mr. A. L. SMITH (Calgary West): Mr Speaker, I made a note of the second last thing which the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Jutras) said, and that was taking averages and showing the difference in the price