

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. DUNCAN McL. MARSHALL moved the second reading of Bill 63, an Act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act, 1935.

He said: Honourable members, after the motion for second reading is agreed to, I intend to move that the Bill be referred to the Committee on Banking and Commerce, in order that the committee may study and report on three proposed amendments. I have received copies of these amendments from the Law Clerk of the Senate, who has drafted them in consultation with a solicitor from the Department of Justice.

The most important amendment has to do with the definition of "producers" who might sell wheat to the Wheat Board. In the Canadian Wheat Board Act they are defined as persons actually engaged in the production of wheat or entitled, whether as landlord, vendor, mortgagee or otherwise by contract or operation of law, to the wheat grown by a producer or to any share therein. Persons who under agreement for sale or mortgage have an interest in the wheat grown by the farmer have a right to sell their share thereof. This Bill does not affect the position of such persons. It simply provides that the Wheat Board may advance 70 cents per bushel for No. 1 Northern, based on Fort William.

The Bill also imposes a limit of 5,000 bushels on the amount which any one farmer, or mortgagee, or person interested by agreement for sale, and so on, may sell to the Wheat Board; or rather the board may advance 70 cents per bushel, for, after all, the transaction is a sale only if the market price does not go beyond 70 cents. The producer gets a participation certificate which entitles him to anything that the Wheat Board may be able to realize over and above 70 cents a bushel on sale of the wheat.

There is also an amendment providing that the Bill shall come into effect on August 1. July 31 is the end of the crop year, and if the Bill became operative before August it would be tantamount to changing the price in what is really still the current crop year. I move second reading of the Bill.

Hon. Mr. ASELTINE: Does the 5,000-bushel limit apply to only one farm a person may be interested in, or to several?

Hon. Mr. MARSHALL: The 5,000-bushel limitation applies to any one farming operation, but if a loan company has advanced money on, say, ten farming operations, then it will be able to market the wheat it has collected on each of those farming operations.

Hon. Mr. HAIG.

Hon. Mr. GRIESBACH: Where is the authority for that statement?

Hon. Mr. MARSHALL: That is not in the Bill. It is contained in the amendment which will be submitted to the Banking and Commerce Committee to-morrow morning. The honourable member from Winnipeg South-Centre (Hon. Mr. Haig) referred to it last Friday when he stated that he had been in conference with Mr. Euler and that the Law Clerk of the Senate and a representative from the Department of Justice would draft the requisite amendment.

Hon. JOHN T. HAIG: Honourable members, I may say, in answer to the question from the honourable member from Edmonton (Hon. Mr. Griesbach), that I think the amendment covers exactly what the honourable senator from Peel (Hon. Mr. Marshall) has stated. Before I proceed, I desire to thank the Hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce for his fairness to me in considering this amendment. The other amendments are simply consequential.

I intend now to deal briefly with the wheat question. I could not be a senator from Manitoba and not realize that wheat and other grains are the most important products of the three Prairie Provinces. I recall that when in 1917, during the war, the price of wheat rose to a very high figure, the Government of that day, whether rightly or wrongly, placed certain restrictions on marketing, and these were continued until 1921. The farmers of Western Canada still believe that without those restrictions wheat would have risen to a very much higher price.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: What were the restrictions?

Hon. Mr. HAIG: The Government took over all the wheat.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: But they never put any restrictions on the price.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: Oh, well—

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I ought to know.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: They set a price on the grain. Many farmers still think that if the market had been allowed to run free the price of wheat would have doubled.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: My honourable friend is quite mistaken. The Government did not impose any such price at all.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: They controlled the marketing of wheat during that year.