

Labour Dispute at Montreal

somewhat alleviated the critical nature of the situation with respect to wheat. I was somewhat disturbed because he apparently felt that insufficient measures with respect to wheat sales were being taken.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Greene: From my limited experience in this field, and I know my hon. friend has had more experience in this field than I have, the wheat board is an extremely efficient organization which is composed of dedicated and able men. They are doing an excellent job in selling wheat. I think that anyone who tries to kid the western farmer or anybody else that wheat can be sold merely by snapping your fingers, that wheat can be sold irrespective of price or production in other countries, will not get far. I do not think you can fool the farmer in the west or anywhere else with that nonsense.

Mr. Pascoe: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Greene: After I have finished, Mr. Speaker. I think the wheat board is doing everything possible that can reasonably be done to sell wheat. In my view, certainly, all the wheat it has been possible to move has been moved and moved effectively.

With regard to the problem in Montreal harbour and wheat sales which have been affected, certainly we should not minimize this situation. Where wheat cannot be moved for some period of time a difficult situation could arise. At the present time the elevators are almost full with adequate supplies of export wheat and domestic feed grains. There are 18.6 million bushels in store at the present time and this is about all that the elevators can take. So from the standpoint of bringing in wheat and of unloading in the port of Montreal, no situation of difficulty at the present time exists in respect of wheat. Of this wheat to which I have referred, about 11 million bushels are export grain, about 6 million bushels are for domestic feed and the rest is United States grain in transit.

An hon. Member: What about production?

Mr. Greene: One lake vessel is unloading grain this afternoon and six are waiting to be unloaded. Of these, one is at berth and the other five are at anchorage. Three ocean vessels are waiting to load grain which is for export. The situation now is that virtually no more grain can be unloaded until space is

made available when ocean vessels begin loading.

The Canadian Livestock Feed Board advises that its estimate of winter requirements for feed grain in Montreal at the close of navigation would be from 10.5 to 11 million bushels. They anticipate that about 7 million bushels of this amount would be in elevators and about 3 to 4 million bushels on board winter storage vessels.

It is understood that the railways are continuing to offer agreed charges to feed merchants in Quebec for movement between Fort William and Quebec destinations. In many locations such rates are competitive with transportation by water and rail, particularly in the case of oats and barley. Should there be difficulty in getting sufficient supplies through the harbours board elevators it is very likely that more agreements will be made with the railways for these agreed charges. Certainly this would provide a way to protect the feed supply situation should it be impossible to provide sufficient grain in Montreal for the winter feeding season.

The worst feature in a situation like this is the harm that is done to the Canadian Wheat Board when overseas customers lose confidence in the board's ability to deliver. I think hon. members on the opposition side are well aware of how successful we have been with our sales of Canadian wheat. I concur wholeheartedly in the remarks that export sales of wheat have made a great contribution to the Canadian economy. Western farmers have made a great contribution to the economy of this country by their productivity.

Certainly the effectiveness of our wheat sales is in direct proportion to the quality of our wheat, which is unsurpassed, and to the reliability of wheat deliveries. With respect to reliability we have a proud record of performance in the past. I do not deny that there may be a great problem with regard to wheat though up to the present time the situation has been under control. No grievous harm has been done with respect to wheat or grain at the present time. As I indicated, the elevators are now full. Nevertheless we should not minimize the situation. If the strike should continue for such a time that the reliability of our deliveries pursuant to our commitments is in any way impaired, we would suffer grievous harm with respect to our international repute for dependability of delivery.