

*Canadian Wheat Board Act (No. 2)*

his day and he is not resolving the problems; in fact with what is happening in the air at the present time I think he is creating more problems than he is solving.

I think this bill errs in that it is definitely not giving enough power to the advisory committee. After all these people are wise; they are smart; they are producers, and should have considerable input with regard to the well-being of the Canadian Wheat Board.

● (1600)

**Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to take the floor after the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Towers) who made such wise remarks. He showed clearly the problem relating to Bill C-88. It is a surprising bill because in many ways it is pretty good, which is the surprising part. What a surprise that the Liberals should introduce a good bill! But that surprise tends to disappear when one realizes that all the good parts of the bill are the result of comments made by members of the opposition.

**Mr. Paproski:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Malone:** But the Liberals who are known as humanitarians did not want to surprise anyone too severely; therefore they included certain inequities in the bill to make it seem normal.

I want to focus attention on these inequities, and focus attention on the motion proposed by the hon. member for Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) with respect to the advisory committee to the Wheat Board. Basically the hon. member's suggestion proposed a guarantee in legislation that the advisory committee shall be made up of farmers or producers.

I challenge government members, especially the Minister of Transport (Mr. Lang), to tell the House what they have against farmers exercising influence on farming business. Was not the Canadian Wheat Board set up in order to sell our grain on foreign markets? Does it not sell the product of the farmer? Therefore, why should not the farmer expect a guarantee in legislation to the effect that the advisory board will be made up of farm producers? It is only normal that the members of an industry want to look after themselves. The legislation ought to provide for the advisory board to be made up only of farmers and that ought to be spelled out.

It is interesting to note what has happened in this country with regard to the input of farmers into Canadian society. When Canada first became a confederate nation, 95 per cent of its people were rural; in essence, most of them were farm people. Today the reverse is the case. Approximately 85 per cent of all Canadians live in cities; that percentage, according to the Lithwick report, will become even larger by the year 2000. In the past decade we lost from the land 170,000 farm people. This means that, at this time in our history, the input into our society of the farming industry is becoming progressively smaller.

It is important to recognize that while the proportion of farmers in Canadian society is becoming progressively smaller, farming is still the most important industry, both in terms of economics and in terms of social well-being. At no time has an advanced culture not been preceded by

[Mr. Towers.]

advanced agriculture. No society in the world has ever developed and advanced without a firm agricultural foundation. All societies depend on a well developed agricultural system. Despite this, the present government is unwilling to guarantee in legislation the right of the farmer to have some say in matters pertaining to the administration of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Farming is a business; the farmer is in the business of food production. Food comes from two sources, soil and water. There are no others. According to United Nations standards, 20 per cent of all Canadians are poor. On the international scene, of course, the incidence of total poverty is much more severe. With regard to the international scene, every day 12,000 children under the age of five die of starvation. Four fifths of this world suffers from malnutrition. In most countries of the world the individual daily calory intake of the people is less than one fifth of the normal intake of the individual Canadian. Therefore the business of food production is one of our most important businesses. Agriculture is our most important industry. There is no advanced society which does not have access to a well developed, progressive agricultural industry.

This piece of legislation purports to make certain adjustments with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board. While I commend some clauses in the bill, I suggest that it is folly not to broaden the scope of the legislation in order to permit farmers to exercise power through the advisory committee. I suggest that enshrined in the legislation should be the provision calling for members of the advisory committee to be farm producers.

It is important that farm producers throughout the Canadian Wheat Board growing area should have confidence in the institution to which they sell their grain and some powers with which to direct and manage their own affairs. But that apparently is not how the government proceeds traditionally; it is not concerned about the rights of individuals. It is concerned about imposing management. In other words, it puts a society based on structure ahead of one based on people's choices. That is why farmers and certain organizations have resisted legislation of this type so strongly.

An order in council does not allow farmers to put their case before a standing committee. I ask the government, why is it afraid to have farm people appear before the standing committee in case changes are to be made in the legislation?

**Mr. Paproski:** They don't like farmers.

**Mr. Malone:** If they were willing to guarantee with legislation that farm people have the right to run their own affairs, they would have nothing to fear.

It is evident that this bill shows a distrust on the part of the government of the farm people of this country. Apparently the government thinks farmers do not have the wherewithal to run their own affairs. That should not be the government's attitude. It should adopt a more trusting attitude to those who have so capably allowed us to achieve our present high standard of living.

**Mr. Paproski:** The way the government treats farmers is shameful.