

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member requesting unanimous consent?

Mr. Benjamin: Yes, Mr. Speaker, since everybody is dying to hear more.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Benjamin: Since there has been an overwhelming request that I continue, I shall, and I thank my hon. colleagues for their kindness.

I want to discuss some information which has been provided to me. It is interesting to note that there is a fight brewing over the definitions in the bill. There is a debate as to whether the bill allows the Wheat Board to operate a voluntary rapeseed pool. I understand that the Wheat Board does not think voluntary pooling will work, and it says that this bill will not allow it to offer one anyway. The minister's advisers say they framed the bill specifically to allow the Wheat Board to form a voluntary pool. I am looking for an explanation from the minister.

I would also like to get an explanation with regard to the establishing of marketing plans. Clause 35.11(1) of the bill reads as follows:

Any association representing a significant number of producers engaged in the production of grain or any association or firm engaged in the processing or marketing of grain in interprovincial or export trade may submit to the Minister for his review and recommendation to the Governor in Council a written proposal for the establishment of a marketing plan.

That will be the voluntary pool. I would like to know why there is nothing in the bill which defines an association. What is an association? What is "a significant number"? I do not see how, without any explanation from the minister, anybody can accept this bill. I do not see how it can work. It is just left purely and simply to the whims of the minister. He can pick and choose any association rapeseed producers want. He can say: "This one is significant, so therefore I will allow it; this one is not, therefore I will not allow it". I know that is something the official opposition wants to see. If that is the Wheat Board's unofficial and off-the-record reaction, it is typical of comments made by people in the grain trade on the whole matter of voluntary pools.

● (2150)

The line elevator companies were unanimous that they will heartily resist the setting up of voluntary pools and their hope is that everyone else will, too. That is not the Alberta, Manitoba or Saskatchewan wheat pools. It is M. M. Patterson and Sons, the Pioneer Grain Company, the Cargill Grain Company, and any other private elevator companies. They are resisting it heartily. Government officials took some delight in giving credit to Cargill Grain Company for encouraging the Minister of Transport to set up voluntary pools. That is not the way I heard it. The way I heard it, the company's executive vice president, Mr. Dick Dawson, said:

I think we'd be the last to set one up. I frankly doubt we'll see them even in rapeseed.

Canadian Wheat Board Act

The possible benefits for pooling rapeseed should be examined. Since the pools would bear at least part of the marketing risks normally handled by the futures market, the amount of hedging on this underspeculated market would drop. This could improve the market's performance and end chronic inversions. The formation of producer groups might bring pressure on the Wheat Board to give higher priority to rapeseed in the allocation of quota and grain cars and so improve the handling of rapeseed. However, the board now attempts to match deliveries to sales and further concessions to rapeseed producers could lead to a backlash from other community groups. You could have wheat growers, barley raisers and flax and rye producers on your neck really fast if you started giving preferential treatment to rapeseed producers for any period of time.

The formation of pools by associations of producers who are not currently marketing rapeseed could lead to a growth in the quantity and quality of marketing information and expertise in the trade. The effect of voluntary pools on market development would depend on their size. Small pools would do little or nothing to develop new markets; the best development work could be done by a single large pool which could afford the associated costs.

The difficulty of predicting annual patronage would work against long term marketing plans by one or more small voluntary pools. Surely it is obvious and patently plain that the only sensible policy which would bring maximum benefits to producers of rapeseed is to put that grain under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board, which can operate pools for rapeseed just as it does for wheat, oats and barley. That is not socialist dogma; it is not ideology put out by the NDP. That is an idea that has been fought for by grain producers since the 1880s. It has been worked for, fought for and paid for by grain producers in the three prairie provinces ever since then.

The principle of orderly marketing has been supported by people of all political stripes. This legislation is nothing more than an attempt to leave loopholes so that the so-called free and open market can be strengthened. Any time this parliament or this government or any other government wants me to vote in favour of providing a 90 per cent guarantee for the so-called open and free market, I want nothing to do with it. I urge the House to defeat this legislation and to call on the Minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board and on the government to bring rapeseed under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board, to provide a pooling system for rapeseed as they do for other grains so that grain producers in western Canada would be better off and would be forever grateful.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe there is consent in the House that the bill be considered in Committee of the Whole instead of referred to the Standing