

# News from Ottawa

## Grain Act Amended to Remove Protection from Grain Growers

By The Guide Special Correspondent.

Ottawa, Feb. 25.—Government ownership of terminal elevators on a scale not yet definitely determined, but probably limited, a modification of the clauses of the Grain Act governing the distribution of cars, including a provision which gives the grain commission to be named wide discretionary powers,—and the establishment of sample markets, with mixing privileges, at Winnipeg, Fort William and Calgary, where a new grain survey board is to be established—such is the policy of the new government, as announced this week in connection with the consideration of Hon. George E. Foster's grain bill.

In all these particulars the bill will differ from the measure as passed by the Senate last year, and which was subsequently introduced in the Commons by Hon. Frank Oliver, but not pressed owing to lack of time.

### Sample Market

The announcement that sample markets would be established came today, when Hon. George E. Foster gave notice that he would propose an amendment declaring that:

"Notwithstanding any other provision in this act that may conflict therewith, sample markets may be established in the cities of Winnipeg, Fort William and Calgary, and the mixing of grain permitted in connection therewith, under such rules and regulations as shall be recommended by the Board and approved by the Governor-in-Council."

This proposal has yet to be discussed in the House and the main debate has yet to take place on the terminal elevators proposals, during the course of which a more definite idea will be given of the extent to which the government proposes to go in for the ownership of elevators.

### Senate May Act

The farmers' battle against changes in the car distribution clauses, won after so many years of effort, has been fought and lost in so far as the House of Commons is concerned. It has been rumored that the Senate will throw out the government's amendments, but as to this no official announcement is forthcoming. Sir Richard Cartwright, who, as minister of trade and commerce, acceded to the demands of the farmers, and who is the leader of the Opposition majority in the Senate, is now considering the situation no doubt, but is keeping his own counsel. That the changes will be fought in the Upper House is certain, as all the Western Senators in discussing the recently passed emergency bill dealing with car distribution declared against the principle of making this permanent legislation. The government's amendments make it permanent, and go a great deal farther, so that a warm fight may be expected in the Upper House.

The wish of the farmers of the West that there should be no change made in the distribution section of the Grain Act was ignored by the House on the advice of Mr. Foster, and a clause embodying four specific and one general amendment was adopted by a standing vote in the committee of 44 to 29 on a straight party division. W. H. Sharpe, Conservative member for Lisgar, voted with the Opposition, and Dr. Schaffner, of Scuris, would doubtless have done so had he been in the House, as he placed himself squarely in opposition to the general widening provision in the course of a speech made in the early part of the discussion. W. D. Staples, of Macdonald, and Arthur Meighen, Portage la Prairie, the only other Conservatives from Manitoba to speak, supported the government's proposal. The amendment gives the grain commission when in operation the right to depart from the present plan of car distribution when an elevator has collapsed, when there is damp grain to be moved, when there is necessity for a hurried distribution of seed grain, when grain is heating, and finally (and

this is the wide, open discretionary clause) "whenever, after due examination, the board considers it necessary and advisable in order to relieve congestion and facilitate the despatch of grain."

While many of the members opposed to the amendment expressed the opinion that it would not be wise to incorporate into this permanent legislation any of these clauses, and that the desires of the farmers should be respected, the chief objection was taken to the sub-section which gives over the distribution of the cars absolutely to the members of the commission, if they desire to take it.

### Strong Opposition

Hon. Frank Oliver, in his usual vehement way, declared that the inclusion of this provision practically spoils the bill. Messrs. Knowles, Martin, Turiff, Clarke, Douglas, White and Cruise all contended that the farmers had gone through a very strenuous fight to secure the present regulations and that they would feel that they had lost their only means of guarantee that they would receive fair treatment in the distribution of cars.

### Cruise Shows Danger

Mr. Cruise, the farmer-member for Dauphin, made his maiden speech in this connection, and created a favorable impression. He said he had received letters from nearly every Grain Growers' association in his constituency adverse to the proposal to make a change in the car distribution clauses of the existing law. "As farmers," he said, "we regard any change with a great amount of suspicion. Ten years ago the bankers, the railway companies and the elevator people combined together and refused to give the farmers cars. The result was that the farmers were forced to ship their grain through the elevators or sell it to the elevators. This enabled the elevator men to lower there the price of grain, and the result was a spread of about seven cents between the street and track price. The farmers succeeded in getting placed in the act the present car distribution clauses, and the result has been that in the past three or four years the spread between street and track has not exceeded two or three cents p.r. bushel. The farmers realize that they have derived great benefit from the clause, as it is at present embodied in the act, and I am strongly opposed to any change." Mr. Cruise added that if the farmers came down to Toronto, "that beautiful city that runs the whole country" (laughter) and insisted to have anything to say to the manufacturers upon the distribution of cars upon which they load their machinery, the manufacturers would say to them: "What business is it of yours?—Go home to the West and mind your own affairs."

### Foster's Explanation

On behalf of the government it was argued by Mr. Foster and several others that the amendments would perpetuate the principle of the existing legislation and improve its enforcement by placing the distribution in the hands of a responsible commission. They predicted that it would work out to the satisfaction of everybody concerned, and that in the course of twelve months the new conditions would be accepted as satisfactory by all parties concerned. Mr. Foster expressed the opinion that the view of the farmer was localized and that on that account he was probably too fearful of the possible consequences of the proposed change. In this regard he said: "A member says: 'I must go by what my farmers tell me.' But does the farmer know better than we, who are in a position to know about everything connected with the grain trade. He knows more about wheat farming and raising and may know a great deal more about wheat selling, but the farmer is localized, necessarily localized. The farmer looks out from

his own locality and does not always view this great system of machinery for transporting produce across this great country; he does not see it as a whole and understand its workings."

Mr. Foster then proceeded to say that the Grain Growers' association had been a very useful and active organization. It had done a great deal of good and a mighty sight of keen work, but whether the association voices the whole opinion of the farmers of the Northwest he was not prepared to say. Mr. Foster supported his amendments also on the ground that they were humanitarian in principle. They would give the board the power to relieve a district where want and distress are imminent, without much disorganizing the general plan in the districts where the situation is less acute.

### Schaffner and Sharpe Opposed

That Dr. Schaffner and W. H. Sharpe, the two government supporters who opposed the proposal to give the grain commission wide discretionary powers, are impressed with the attitude of the farmers was made clear by their speeches. Dr. Schaffner said that he would be prepared to justify in his constituency the four sub-sections giving the commissioners the power to act under certain exceptional conditions, but he was against the proposal to give the men who might constitute the board the right to act whenever they might deem it expedient to do so. "I must say, I cannot help saying," he declared, "that I am a little afraid of clause (e). If it does not go any further than it says, well and good,—and after all, perhaps that is the only argument one has a right to make, that it means what it says—but I know that the arguments of the farmers will be that it is the thin edge of the wedge. Subsection (e) reads: 'When after due examination the board considers it necessary and desirable, in order to relieve congestion and facilitate the despatch of grain.' Now, if it always remained there, I believe the farmers would not so seriously object to this subsection."

In conclusion Dr. Schaffner said: "I think it was the member for Macdonald (Mr. Staples) who said that a farmer might have five thousand bushels of grain in his granary spoiling, because of damp or for some other reason. Surely it would be of advantage to the farmers if the commission had the power, although he had had his car, to grant him the privilege of receiving another car. Still, so far as this subsection (e) is concerned, I do not feel that I am in a position to favor so broad an extension of the powers of the commission as this would seem to give. I am strongly in favor of the other clauses, but this subsection I could hardly support without further light."

Mr. Sharpe spoke shortly before the vote was called. He put his position in a nutshell in the opening paragraph of his speech: "I would like to make my position perfectly clear in this matter," he said. "This amendment covers the whole of clause 207 of this bill. There are five subsections in the amendment. The first (a) is in connection with an elevator collapsing; (b) in connection with the relief of damp grain; (c) is in connection with seed grain; (d) in connection with heated grain. All these I favor. But subsection (e), in my humble opinion, goes a little too far. I would not give that power to the commission. If I were voting on this subsection separately, I would certainly vote against the insertion of subsection (e) of the amendment. If I have to vote on the whole five at once, I will have to vote for the amendment. The vote when taken was on the subsections separately, and Mr. Sharpe was as good as his word, he being the only member on the government side to vote with the Opposition."

### Terminal Elevator Policy

The announcement of the minister of trade and commerce of the govern-

ment's terminal elevator policy was made just before the House rose at a late hour on Tuesday night. It was not a set announcement, but the information came out as the result of a number of queries on the part of Opposition members. When consideration of the terminal elevator clauses was taken up Hon. Dr. Pugsley said he was unable to see why the provision should not be general that elevators might be taken over and operated by the government to as much advantage on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and on the St. Lawrence as at Fort William and Port Arthur.

"This gives power to the Governor-in-Council," said Mr. Foster, "to construct, acquire, lease or expropriate any terminal elevator, if Parliament has granted the money for such purpose. The only terminal point at the present time is Fort William and Port Arthur."

Mr. Pugsley objected that the powers of the board should not be limited to those points. Montreal, Quebec, Halifax, St. John, Tiffin, Vancouver and Victoria, he said, were just as much terminal points as Port Arthur and Fort William. He would object, however, to the board having the power to decide at what points the government shall take over or construct elevators, and own and manage them.

Mr. Foster agreed that the board should not have such powers. It has not the power to establish inspection divisions, except with the approval of the Governor-in-Council. He moved that the word "board" be struck out and the words "Governor-in-Council" be substituted.

A discussion followed as to the desirability of terminal elevators being supplied at St. John and other points. Mr. Foster pointed out that the Dominion government have the right to build elevators in St. John now, if they desire to do so, but the purposes of the act are special purposes, looking to the regulation of the grain trade from the West, and specially at the great terminal points. Certain abuses have existed and it was contended that the control and supervision of the government at those points was not sufficient to protect the grain shippers and the grain exporters and the clause was meant to in some way cope with the difficulty.

Mr. Pugsley: "By the government acquiring the elevators?"

Mr. Foster: "That is the question involved. We take the power to do it."

Mr. Pugsley: "Is it intended to do it?"

Mr. Foster: "Yes. There will be

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## Special Co-operative Number

A special Co-operative Number of The Guide will be published during the coming spring. Last year we published a Co-operative Number, containing reports of the co-operative buying and selling done by farmers' organizations in the West. These organizations are growing rapidly and we want to tell our readers what they have done during the past year. We would like to have every co-operative society in the West and every farmers' organization that has done any co-operative work send us a full report for publication. Every local association that has bought twine, coal or anything else co-operatively should send us a report for this special number, showing what has been bought, the methods adopted and the saving effected. The same issue will contain articles showing what has been done along co-operative lines by the farmers in Ontario, Minnesota, Wisconsin and California. Send along the reports not later than March 15. Let us make the Co-operative Number a good one.