

Canada Grain Bill

concern has been with their own problems and what is happening to the grain companies, with hardly a thought given to the export market.

● (8:10 p.m.)

I suggest that this bill is concerned with the export market. I hasten to say that some grain companies had a much better approach to this problem than had the Grains Council, but on the whole I was disappointed with the presentations. The Canada Grains Council should give leadership and bring forward new ideas regarding the problems experienced in regard to western Canadian grain. They should be looking for new and better varieties of grain, for cheaper methods of handling and transportation. They should be looking for future markets, finding out where they are and what kind of grains they need.

The possibilities for trade should be examined from the point of view of credit arrangements. I think there needs to be a shake-up within the council, because I do not think they have the leadership necessary to accomplish these things. The Canada Grains Council should be looking at the shifting emphasis in the market from the primary products of grain to secondary products such as meat. They should investigate the possibilities in the world meat market, and whether it might be worth while developing a market which would provide more employment than the growing of grain. This is just one of many areas that should be investigated.

The Canada Grains Council is a creature of the government, Mr. Speaker, and we should demand that they do better or be fired. The council should consider the value of grain, particularly wheat, for food. Just recently I read in the press that enriched bread was only good enough for rats to starve on. I suggest that whole wheat has much more value than this. If there is something wrong with the bread, it is because something is taken out of the wheat to start with, because wheat is rich in vitamins, minerals, protein and starch. As a country of grain producers we should be looking for improved foods and new uses for our wheat. Within the terms of this bill there may be room for such investigation.

We do not wish to belabour the point, Mr. Speaker. As we have said on a number of occasions, we are in favour of the bill and feel that it should be dealt with now. Therefore, we are quite prepared to support it.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, I think it could be expected that the member representing the constituency which includes the wheat city of the west, the city of Brandon, would be concerned with the implications of Bill C-175 as it has come before the House. I followed the debate during the course of the afternoon and was glad to learn that the minister has modified his position considerably since this measure was first introduced during the last session as Bill C-196.

Within the limitations of time available today I have re-read the debate on that occasion. The minister's emphasis at that time was on the necessity for haste because fundamental amendments to the Canada Grain

[Mr. Thomson.]

Act were of the utmost importance if we were to deal with the problem that had reached crisis proportions by last spring, namely, the difficulty caused by the drastic drop in wheat sales in particular and grain sales in general. As was pointed out by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) who spoke for the official opposition, the minister was on a slightly different wicket today. The thesis previously propounded by the minister was that the grain export situation depended upon the quick passage of the bill. That thesis no longer holds water.

As I remarked earlier, as the representative of a constituency still closely tied to grain for its continued prosperity, I feel it is of the utmost importance that the contents of this bill be examined carefully and in detail. This is the first time since 1930 that any major amendments have been made to the Canada Grain Act. The general state of the Prairie economy demonstrates that wheat is still king in the maintenance of prosperity. The situation which has developed over the past two years, the growing spirit of western alienation, has largely arisen from the fact that this government has been completely out of touch with the fundamental position of wheat in the well-being of the Prairie economy. Policies have been initiated that are incomprehensible to most Prairie farmers and producers.

I have attended many meetings where various attempts have been made to grapple with the growing crisis in the grain trade. Last spring I attended several meetings in connection with the Lift program, the Lower Inventory for Tomorrow program as it was described by the government, and the Lower Income for Tomorrow program as it was dubbed by the unhappy farmers.

At that time the criticism was that the federal government, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson), and the minister from Saskatchewan responsible for the Wheat Board had failed to appreciate that Lift would do nothing to solve the grain problem; in fact, in the long run it would aggravate it. This has been demonstrated recently by the report of increased grain sales with the reopening of the market in mainland China and the prospects of substantial sales of grain, primarily wheat, to the Soviet Union. Indeed, we find that the government so badly miscalculated in connection with the Lift program that perhaps by creating an artificial crop failure, or a government-directed crop failure as it is described by the farmers, we have placed our future sales position and prospects in jeopardy.

● (8:20 p.m.)

Therefore, I would urge very strongly, Mr. Speaker, that instead of acceding to the minister's request to reinstate the bill before the House at the level it had reached in the previous Parliament, we move very carefully and cautiously in order that we may make a fundamental revision of the Canada Grain Act and deal with the critical problems of our grain industry. It has been demonstrated by the changes that have taken place in the last few months that there is no need for haste. Exports are opening up, notwithstanding our dealing or not dealing with the matter of protein content. Therefore,