

Canada Grain Act

Like all hon. members of the House, I want to see sound legislation which falls within the four corners of the law of the land. It appears to me that the government is attempting to bring in legislation which is defective not only as to substance but as to law. I offer this advice in the hope that before we again deal with the bill the minister will take another look at it.

Mr. Cliff Downey (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and speak on this bill. Although I was not present during all the committee hearings on the bill because I was a member of the Finance Committee when it discussed another government botch, the white paper on taxation, I think I am fully qualified to speak on the bill in view of the fact that, as is the agricultural spokesman for the NDP, I am a grain farmer. I have made a good living from being a grain farmer and think I know as well as anyone in the House the problems that arise in this area.

The impression that has been created by several speakers is that this bill must go through in great haste or, it is implied, Canadian grain sales will suffer. Due in part to better salesmanship and, I suppose, to unfavourable weather conditions in many parts of the world, grain sales in general have increased rapidly in the past six months. The entire picture has changed for the grain farmer.

I can imagine what would have happened had this bill been passed last spring or last winter. Approximately 107 pages containing increased bureaucratic controls and regulations would have been given as the factor behind our increased grain sales. I can imagine the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) saying, "What a wonderful thing we have done. We have a new grain act. Look at all the grain sales in the country. We have more grain sales in prospect than we can possibly move to the markets. It will strain our transportation facilities to sell it. All this is the result of this glorious bill that introduced protein grading and various other provisions." I do not deny that some provisions of the bill may be worth considering; I am simply saying that under the existing rules applicable to grain sales all these sales have been made without any help from this bill.

A great deal is made of the protein grading provisions. Protein grading is said to be the "in" thing if you want to sell grain. In some areas protein grading probably will be beneficial. I submit that only a small amendment to

the present grain act would have been needed to bring in protein grading. We do not need 107 pages of controls which will result from a bill such as this one. The hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) made a very eloquent presentation on this subject, but in common with almost everything else the New Democratic Party proposes, his suggestions entail controls, controls and more controls. The more control they have over every individual in this country, the better they like it. That is what their presentations boil down to on whatever subject they speak. The Canada Grains Council was appointed by the government. They recommended the majority of these amendments but as was pointed out earlier, very few were accepted. I think the amendment regarding the inclusion of trucks as well as railway cars is an important one. It becomes increasingly important when we consider future possible railway line abandonment. The government, as well as many others, have suggested that eventually the number of delivery points across the Prairie region should be cut to 50. I think there are a great many impractical points in this argument. There are now 1,800 delivery points. If this number is reduced to 50, there will be 36 times the number of deliveries to each elevator. The mechanical problems involved would be astronomical.

● (4:00 p.m.)

If deliveries to an elevator were multiplied by 36, grain could be handled if deliveries were evenly spread over the whole year. However, weather conditions must be considered, and times when the agricultural industry is occupied with seeding, harvesting and other necessary work. It is impossible to spread unloadings from farm to elevator so there will not be a complete bottleneck in an area. In the future we may have three classes of elevators. Naturally, there will be the terminal elevators. We may also have on-track delivery points,—a larger, more consolidated unit—as well as off-track delivery points where it would be necessary to move the grain out of this type of elevator by truck. Movement of this kind is not impractical when we consider that many railway boxcars today handle only 1,300 or 1,400 bushels of grain. I think there are cars that handle only 1,300 bushels. There are trucks for highway travel that carry 1,000 bushels. The element of cost as between the two types of transportation is not significant. There are two elevators within 15 miles of the town in which I live. Although the tracks were removed