

Canadian Wheat Board Act

Supplies of No. 3 Canadian Red Wheat were estimated at 2,587,000 tonnes, while Canada feed was estimated at only 182,000 tonnes, which is down from 1,804,000 tonnes from last year. I am trying to indicate by this that there is very little low grade wheat available for the production of gasohol.

The Canadian Wheat Board was consulted and they suggested the concept and application of these amendments would raise many difficulties among them. Under the Canada Grain Act, infested or out-of-condition grain can only enter or be discharged from an elevator with the approval and by order of the Canadian Grain Commission. If this is done, the bin and equipment used must subsequently be fumigated as must railway cars and terminals handling it. If trucks are used to transport this grain, they must also be fumigated before carrying other proper grain. Infested grain, when found on a farm, is usually not in a large quantity. The practice has been for the owner of such grain to sell it to nearby feeders or other purchasers in ways that do not involve the ordinary commercial grain handling system. The board has the power to buy infested or out-of-condition grain if it so wishes, but the board has never knowingly made such purchases except for out-of-condition grain in the tough and damp categories which can be conditioned by blending or drying. It would be better to leave the present practices in operation and allow the producers of such grain as the bill describes to dispose of it as it has been in the past, with the additional alternative of selling to a methanol plant in the manner described.

● (1650)

Before concluding, therefore, let me say that the government does not feel that the Canadian Wheat Board Act need be amended as set out in the bill. A firm which is already producing fuel alcohol is receiving quantities of grain off-board directly from producers by truck. The arrangement is apparently to the satisfaction of the company, the producers and the board. The quantities of infested, out-of-condition or low grade grain are never very large. Empowering the board to take delivery and dispose of such grains would not be very practical and the administrative costs could be substantial. Low-grade wheats tend to remain outside the usual market channels. They are fed to animals or are disposed of by producers. The small quantities of infested and contaminated grain which might possibly enter the system are rigidly controlled and are not permitted to move through regular commercial channels when detected. It is the opinion of the Canadian Wheat Board that it would be better to leave the present practices in operation to allow producers to dispose of low-grade, infested, contaminated or out-of-condition grain as they have in the past.

The car unloads at Thunder Bay have steadily increased. We will be able to reach record highs of delivery of grain in the current crop year. The car unloads at Thunder Bay this week demonstrate that there has been a real pick-up since the strike. In the week ending November 14, on the west coast there were 2,593 car unloads and at Thunder Bay, 6,989, for a total of 9,582 car unloads this week as compared to 7,676 at the same time last year.

What is of more concern to western farmers is the transportation and the availability of equipment to move grain to market and to export. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) is taking all necessary steps with Mr. Radke of the Grain Transportation Authority to ensure that the grain transportation system is able to move 26 million tonnes to export position this year. The terminals at Vancouver will have to handle 20 per cent more grain than the record set last year, while at Thunder Bay handlings will have to be about 16 per cent better than any previous record there. Total exports to November 4 from all ports were 2.6 per cent ahead of Thunder Bay early in the crop year. To quote from a telegram which I received, Mr. Radke said:

The short-term outlook in transportation is good and recent steps toward financing a new terminal at Prince Rupert, along with commitments to purchase six new lake freighters, promise even greater capacity.

Mr. Radke also recommended that the Canadian Wheat Board or the Canadian government acquire additional hopper cars in the next three years. This is one of the matters with which the Minister of Transport will deal.

By giving these examples I am trying to say that we have fine quality wheat. It is all needed for export, it is all being sold. There is little of it to be disposed of, in the manner of contaminated or spoiled wheat, for the production of gasohol. There is no need to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act at this time to provide gasohol plants in either Manitoba or Alberta. It is possible under the current system, with the present regulations and authority of the Canadian Wheat Board, to do so. For this reason the government urges the House not to agree to the amendments proposed in Bill C-259.

Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to talk out this bill because it is an excellent one. I congratulate the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) for introducing it. The entire address read by the parliamentary secretary—and I emphasize “read”—is most dismaying. It shows a lack of desire to do anything new—do not rock the ship, do not do anything the Canadian Wheat Board or the government does not want to do. He did not say that the farmers did not want to do it. Farmers should be given an opportunity. The Canadian Wheat Board has annual meetings. It would be logical for the Wheat Board to give the farmers who produce wheat an opportunity to do it.

A few years ago a good field of soft wheat was lost in the Medicine Hat area because there was no place for it. The hon. member for Wetaskiwin is not saying that they should interfere with the good, high protein wheat; not at all. This can be done—there is always some spoiled wheat.

In connection with the lack of food and the immorality of using wheat for alcohol production, at the present time there is a method of taking out the high protein, leaving the basic food product. It is not a case of doing this or that. The wheat board has never challenged farmers to produce more wheat or differ-