

MEDIA RELEASE

Serious Trade Challenge Demands “Made in Canada” Solution

February 18, 2002: “The United States Trade Representative (USTR) decision against the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) represents a serious threat to western Canadian grain farmers,” said Art Enns, President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association.

“This is not a victory for Canadian farmers just because the Americans did not impose a tariff,” said Ted Menzies, Alberta Vice President. “The recommendations of the Trade Representative raise a very serious challenge to the CWB’s practices, and we have to address the problems.”

“It is interesting that the main targets of the trade investigation are the very same things that the CWB claims as its strengths,” said Enns. “Price pooling, and the government guarantee of its debts are two examples that have drawn a great deal of negative attention from both Canadian and American producers.”

According to Wheat Grower Vice President Bernie Sambrook, “It is hard to say that the CWB’s practices does not give it an advantage, when the CWB itself has been boasting about these very things.”

Enns pointed out that, of all the various Canadian grain marketing systems, it is only the monopolistic Canadian Wheat Board that is the target of U.S. attacks. “Non-board grains do not get attacked. The Ontario wheat marketing system does not get attacked. It is only the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board that gets attacked,” said Enns, “and this poses a major challenge for all western farmers.”

He said that fighting the Americans to preserve the CWB monopoly will not be in the interests of Western Canadian grain farmers. “We know that the majority of western farmers want to have some choice in how they market their wheat and barley. We need to reshape our system so that we decide how it is designed, not the Americans or the World Trade Organization.”

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