

Withholding of Grain Payments

• (8:40 p.m.)

I think, too, of the abuse of a grant that was paid, an illegal grant. I am talking of money that was paid to the Winnipeg games during Expo year. There was a deficit on those games and it was paid out of the contingency fund. The legislation setting up the Fitness and Amateur Sport Council stipulates that its expenditures should not exceed \$5 million a year, yet the authority went ahead and paid money out of the contingency fund instead of coming to Parliament and seeking our authority to pay it.

Not only has the government failed to pay a bill that it is obligated to pay under the statute, but it has whittled away at the authority of this House until it can be said that it has paid some bills without the proper authority to do so. My time has almost expired. I just wish to say that as an elected representative in a democratic country where the government is responsible, through the executive, to Parliament, it is my solemn obligation and the solemn obligation of all hon. members to see that the government of the day is held responsible for its actions. I do not care what party forms the government. I am here to defend the law in the highest court in the land. This is basic to our system of government. Therefore, I have no hesitation whatsoever in supporting this vote of non-confidence in a government that does not obey the will of Parliament.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker—

An hon. Member: Will you close the debate?

Mr. Olson: No, I will not be closing the debate. I understand it will be continuing until 9.45 tonight. There are two aspects of the motion before the House with which I would like to deal. One is the allegation that the government has done something wrong or immoral or illegal. The other aspect concerns the consequences to the people affected whether or not this bill is passed, whether the payments are made in accordance with its provisions or whether the opposition prevents the government and the House making a decision on the bill, thus requiring the government to revert to the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act and make the payments under the provisions of that act.

Dealing with the first aspect, Mr. Speaker, it was no secret to the members of this House nor to the farming community that the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act was part of Bill C-244. On October 29, 1970, the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) sent details of a proposal to members of this House and to the farming community at large in western Canada in which was included the stabilization bill—generally the provisions that are now in this bill—and, in addition, the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. What happened following that?

The minister responsible for the Wheat Board invited the farm organizations and everyone interested to make representations to him and to Members of Parliament respecting the proposal in that document. Many representations were received. There were some who expressed disapproval of the general proposal and there were others who expressed approval in principle that government had finally come to grips with the over-all problem of rational-

[Mr. Hales.]

izing the totality of the grain handling and marketing systems, but they had some reservations about certain details. We admit that.

A lengthy period of time was provided for such representations to be made through the proper channels and, as I say, representations were made. Following all the discussion that the responsible minister had with those organizations, that I had with many of the organizations and, indeed, that other members of the House had, we introduced Bill C-244. There was debate in the House on it. The minister candidly and freely admitted that some suggested amendments had come in even following all that, which he was prepared to consider in the standing committee when the bill received second reading.

There were some amendments made in the standing committee. But the point that I think is essential in the context of the want of confidence motion now before us is that all through this procedure which went on for months it was known, well known, that the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act was part of the proposition. There was no secret about that.

As a matter of fact, when witnesses from the Canadian Wheat Board appeared before the standing committee they were asked how much would be paid out under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act if the proposal incorporated in this bill were not acted upon. For anyone to say in this debate that there was something immoral, secretive and deceptive about all this procedure is most ridiculous.

In the remaining, brief time at my disposal I would like to speak about some of the consequences to grain producers in western Canada if the opposition forces us to abandon this bill.

Mr. Horner: Pay your bills.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Olson: Mr. Speaker, despite all their squealing and screaming, if the opposition refuses to pass this bill the government will be paying—as the minister said, with interest—about \$40 million less than it would be paying for the farmers' benefit under Bill C-244. What is even worse is that hon. members from western Canada, particularly those from grain growing areas, who know how this money is distributed know that the main burden of the loss of that \$40 million will fall on the smaller producers.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Olson: The proposal under Bill C-244 is to pay out about \$1.45 per acre, up to 640 acres, to all producers equally on that basis. Without Bill C-244 it means that farmers are going to be paid on a per bushel basis. Those who have not delivered a large quota during the 1970-71 or 1969-70 years, or for any reason have not had enough grain to fill their quota, or indeed had a small quota, will get proportionately much less than the larger producers.

• (8:50 p.m.)

Mr. Peters: But that is the law.

Mr. Olson: Now, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!