

1970, and substituting therefor the \$100 million payment under the stabilization bill for that same crop year, we could fairly easily have in fact made the payment to the Wheat Board.

An hon. Member: Why did you not do it?

Mr. Lang: We could have done that with the intention that upon the enactment of the bill, the amount indicated would have to be repaid by the Wheat Board to the government of Canada, in which case the Wheat Board would have had to carry that in the contingency fund. If I had done that, I think some hon. members opposite might have dragged the Wheat Board into partisan political debate and I thought it might be better to have that partisan political debate aimed at myself rather than at the Wheat Board. I believe, above all that, with the hidden enemies of the Wheat Board which are located over there in this House—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Lang:—that the Wheat Board should be protected.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The minister wears the halo of a confused martyr with all that rectitude.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, may I direct a question to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board. Can he tell the House by what legal authority, order in council, minute of the Treasury Board, or what have you, the government has refrained from paying the money set out in the Temporary Reserves Wheat Act and, in particular, since he has referred to the fact that Bill C-244 was introduced on April 29, 1971, by what authority were those payments not made between August 1, 1970, and April, 1971, when they were required to be made on a monthly basis under the provisions of Chapter 2 of the statutes of 1956?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, when this House speaks in enacting Bill C-244, as it will presumably if the opposition will allow that to happen and as the government intends and proposes—

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): But the minister has no right to anticipate that.

Mr. Lang:—then the effect of that law will be the removal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act as of July 31, 1970. It was on the prospective implementation, therefore, of this bill that the government acted to carry out what would be the proper result the moment that bill is passed. I indicated that we could, indeed, have made the payment and have held the money in trust for return, but I had good reason for thinking that that was not necessarily the most desirable course to recommend. I think the key question when this bill comes to this House again will be whether hon. members, who have seen it approved in this House on second reading and seen it approved in committee as we ran through it clause by

Withholding of Grain Payments

clause will allow the question on the bill to come to a vote, so that the \$100 million can go to the farmers.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): That still is no answer.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It seems difficult for the minister to answer my specific question, namely, what authority the government has for its action. May I ask the minister if he is aware that in 1968 the government imposed and collected a 5 per cent surcharge, on the premise that Parliament would pass it, only to discover that Parliament defeated that bill? What position will the government be in if Bill C-244 does not pass?

Mr. McGrath: Try that one on for size.

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I am optimistic that before long we will have an answer to that question.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lang: If the hon. member's hypothesis were to materialize, I am sure he can imagine some of the answers which would follow. I expect, before long, that we will resolve the issue and answer the question.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): The minister did not have the right to assume what he assumed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I believe that there will be a forum tomorrow morning at eleven o'clock in which questions might be asked. Having said that, I gather there is a general inclination among hon. members for this matter to be pursued. I think it would be fair if I were to recognize the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) on a question only and then go to the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), because he wants to participate in the debate.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, if I could expect an honest and sensible answer, and I doubt that I could get it, I would ask a question. I have no intention of asking a question. I wish to engage in debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I thought the hon. member wanted to ask a question. The hon. member for Vegreville.

Mr. Don Mazankowski (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity of seconding the motion proposed by the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams). Of course, I welcome the opportunity to enter this debate. The effort of bringing this matter before this distinguished chamber for consideration has been trying and exhaustive. It is not often that I have the opportunity of following the minister in charge of the Wheat Board.

An hon. Member: Where are you going, Otto?

Mr. Mazankowski: The minister really did not enlighten us on this issue. He came up with the same old clichés about filibusters and obstructionism. It was obvious from the outset that he was fighting for his political life.

Mr. Peters: And he lost.