

Withholding of Grain Payments

benefit of the farmers who need the money; and that if he failed to do so he would, in effect, give the farmers a promissory note that they would be reimbursed under the old act, and if the session stops and the new legislation is not through, that interest would be paid. In my opinion, I would rather take the promissory note of this minister than listen to all the b.s. to which I have had to listen up to this point.

An hon. Member: Explain.

Mr. Osler: I am absolutely certain that if, in spite of all logic and good sense, this bill does not pass before it dies on the order paper, the government will not renege on the farmers and will pay interest on whatever money it is owing.

Mr. Paproski: They have reneged already. Let the courts decide.

Mr. Osler: Why does not someone take it to a court, then?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. Although the Chair said earlier that the House was in a good mood this afternoon, and although I have tried to be as lenient as possible, I think hon. members should remember that it is they primarily who are responsible for the good standing of this House. This can only be achieved by following as closely as possible the rules concerning relevancy and order, as well as other rules of this House. The Chair cannot be the sole person who has this responsibility, and I would ask for the co-operation of hon. members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Osler: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am almost finished anyway. As I understand the point, the farmers at this moment have a promissory note solemnly given to them this afternoon by the minister that they will be paid under the old Act, if the government is refused passage of the new bill. If it is unduly delayed, they will be reimbursed with interest. What can be fairer than that? Should one be legalistic and follow through by paying under the old bill, even though he would be putting in with one hand and taking out with another? This is not a businesslike way of doing things. It would be a stupid procedure. The one being followed is in no way contempt of Parliament, as these hon. members have been trying to say.

An hon. Member: Shame on you.

Mr. Osler: If it were contempt of Parliament, I would be as concerned as anyone else. I join my colleague who spoke a moment ago on a point of privilege. Whether or not the point of privilege was allowed, loose accusations help no one. They do not help the mood of the country, and they do not get a nickel nearer to the pockets of the farmers.

Hon. members opposite are speaking as if members on this side were in contempt of Parliament. If farmers do not get their money, I will be as concerned as any hon. member on the other side of the House and I will certainly hold the government responsible, but I have enough confidence in this government to know that farmers will get their money.

Mr. Paproski: Shame on you. You should know better. You are a phony grit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Is the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom) rising on a point of order?

Mr. Nystrom: I wonder if the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Osler) would answer a question, since his time has not expired.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member knows that he can only ask a question if he gets the consent of the hon. member who had the floor.

Mr. Osler: Yes.

Mr. Nystrom: I should like to ask the hon. member a simple question to which he can respond probably by a yes or a no. I put my question sincerely. Does he think, regardless of all political arguments, that the government has the legal right to withhold these payments under the act before the act has been rescinded? Has the government that right, regardless of all political bartering, yes or no?

Mr. Osler: Even if I were a lawyer I do not suppose I would say that it has or it has not, yes or no. Lawyers make their living by making long, learned decisions.

Mr. Paproski: You are not a lawyer.

Mr. Osler: If you would just shut up, you would hear my answer. My answer is that if in a reasonable length of time the government did not pay out its obligation it would be held liable like anybody else, but the minister just told you that the money will be paid within a reasonable length of time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paproski: After the next election.

Mr. Nystrom: May I ask a supplementary question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. Again it is not the normal practice nor is it in accordance with the rules of the House—although a question may be asked with the permission of the hon. member—to allow numerous questions. I am ready to allow one more question if the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre accepts it. However, following that, we will go to the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin).

Mr. Nystrom: In view of the fact that the hon. member referred to a reasonable length of time, and it is now 14 or 15 months since the payments were last made, could the hon. member tell us what he thinks is a reasonable length of time before he would act as we are acting on this side of the House?

• (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Osler: Mr. Speaker, I thought I made it clear earlier. This session will come to an end and the bill will die on the order paper if it has not been passed. If the government has not persuaded the opposition by that time that it is serious about its agricultural legislation, then we have no recourse but to pay under the old act.