

Supply—Finance

making a certain announcement in Winnipeg. In doing so I was very much influenced by the views of the advisory committee to the Canadian Wheat Board.

The advisory committee to the Canadian Wheat Board is composed, as hon. members at least from the west know, of some of the most eminent leaders of the farming community in western Canada, as I recall it, the presidents of the three western wheat pools, the president of the United Grain Growers and representatives from farmers' unions.

I should like to state what those eminent gentlemen suggested because it is pertinent to the procedure I have been following consistently in this house. I am sorry I have not got the date of their suggestion but it was that when the board has any payments to make these announcements should be made by the board and not by the minister, the minister, because if the government makes the announcement the producers get the idea they are receiving government money. Therefore I have been very careful in all the statements I have made to make it clear to the western farmers that the Canadian Wheat Board is their agency responsible to them and that the minister does not interfere with the operations of that board.

On many, many occasions, Mr. Chairman, I have made that fact quite clear in this house. Indeed, hon. members will recall the first statement I made in the house when I announced the conclusion of the first agreement, made while this government has been in office, between the Canadian Wheat Board and Communist China. At that time I said the credit for this went to the wheat board and not to me. This caused a great deal of comment in western Canada to the effect that for the first time a minister responsible for the wheat board was giving full credit to the wheat board, which deserved the credit. This related to that first transaction and to the transaction which preceded it in respect of which the hon. member for Qu'Appelle made a trip to Hong Kong in an attempt to get in on some of the credit for that great transaction.

• (3:50 p.m.)

I therefore decided on this occasion to carry this process of administrative clarification one step further, because on the previous occasions when I had been making these announcements all I said was "the Canadian Wheat Board is today making the following

announcement in Winnipeg". Therefore I decided that, rather than cause any further confusion as to the relationship between the minister and the board, the best thing, the sound parliamentary practice under the circumstances, was for me to table in the house the statement made by the Canadian Wheat Board that day. My reading it into *Hansard* made no difference to the statement and if I read it, it would appear that I was somehow taking responsibility for some announcement of government policy. There was no government policy involved. This was simply a statement by the Canadian Wheat Board of the results of their operations during the crop year 1964-65.

This was not arrogant nor was it intended to be arrogant; nor, may I say, have I any qualms at all about discussing this announcement on these estimates or at any other time. This is the time to discuss these things. I answered questions about the announcement in the house that day; I was ready to answer as many as were put to me.

May I say in conclusion that there is no suggestion that I was trying to duck any responsibility. That was the farthest thing from my mind. I think that in the very difficult circumstances that prevailed with respect to the marketing of the 1964-65 crop the Canadian Wheat Board did an excellent job.

Mr. Jorgenson: They did but you failed miserably in your responsibility.

Mr. Hamilton: Mr. Chairman, we all have some responsibility to get these estimates through in view of the impending end of the financial year. However, I must observe in all frankness that the minister's statement today indicates that he has no political judgment either out in the country or in handling the feelings of members of the house with regard to our responsibilities to the people of Canada.

The argument put forward by the minister today in his opening statement is nothing more nor less than a political argument that has been fought in western Canada since the change of government in April, 1963. We in western Canada gave our answer loud and clear last November 8 with regard to how we felt about the arguments of the minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Hamilton: The minister has made two main points. One is that he has tried to establish in the minds of the public the