

of these farmers who commits this offence in an effort to make a living when he knows that a minister of the Crown is breaking the law of this land?

When we first come to Parliament many of us have a certain amount of idealism. After members are here for a while this disappears. I was never so ashamed in my life as I was when I discovered that in the latest issue of the Canadian statutes the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act had been left out. It has not been rescinded by Parliament but it cannot be found in that latest issue. This act is still in force, but it is not on the statute books. This government is not concerned with economics or the plight of farmers. But their situation is completely irrelevant to this discussion. If this institution means anything it should be safeguarded by those who are here. This debate should not be another meaningless debate only with one day coverage in the newspapers tomorrow. It should mean a great deal more than that.

I was talking recently to one of my constituents. I spoke of the possibility of an election this fall. He said he did not really believe there would be an election but that the government would stay in office for a full five-year period. He suggested that a general election would then be postponed by the government as a result of an incident such as that which precipitated the invocation of the War Measures Act. He said he would be surprised if there were ever another democratic election in this country. The more I think about his statement, keeping in mind what has taken place in the last few days, the more I am inclined to agree with him.

I have never been as concerned about the future of our democracy as I have been in the last day or two. I do not intend to continue my remarks because I know other speakers wish to take part in the debate tonight, but I remind hon. members that this is the main issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to participate in this debate when the motion was introduced in the House this afternoon. Tonight I listened to a number of speeches and all the remarks I heard made me feel like making a contribution.

I have always felt somewhat at ease when discussing bills, especially these last three months, because of my position which permits me, quite objectively, to study and listen to sometimes serious, sometimes not so serious and sometimes regrettably partisan speeches made in this House.

However, I had several opportunities to require better objectivity than what we have tonight. Once again, tonight, it seems that some hon. members do not know what objectivity means. They have taken a negative attitude, an attitude they have used either in committee, or in the House, while demanding justice and a pattern of behaviour which they have forgotten themselves.

As previous speakers did, I realize how serious this motion is. There are legal and practical problems. If we sincerely want to help our producers or farmers throughout the country, I am quite in agreement with all those willing to do so. I listened to the excellent speech of the

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member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) and I have also appreciated some remarks by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Lessard). And yet I realize, after several members of the opposition have blamed the government, that objectivity is lacking.

I wish, as the member for Bellechasse said, that western and eastern farmers would enjoy Parliament's consideration, provided that once and for all we could be in agreement and that it is not suggested that the government is granting more to a certain area of the country than to another. We have listened to a number of speeches from wheat producers over the last few years. I quite realize also how important wheat production is in our economic system.

• (11:40 p.m.)

This motion is extremely important since it appears that the government has not paid what they owed. Having attended quite regularly the meetings of the committee on agriculture, I know that this bill has been extensively discussed. I also know that it would be unfair to say that the government has not tried to look favourably upon farmers, during the last three years. Were the government's proposals inadequate? It is evident that we will always suggest they were. Still, we have to admit that certain efforts were made. We have to admit it, and taking into account our commitments and the responsibility it behoves us to show in this House towards all segments of society, including farmers, we have nevertheless to admit that the government has made efforts which some will praise, while others will show lesser appreciation; but it would be certainly unfair to say that the government has done nothing. Besides nobody in the House did anything.

We should often ask ourselves the following question: Has the member, has the minister or has the government done enough? Could they do better? All members here could ask themselves this question: Could we do better than the government? If so, resorting to obstruction, to an attitude likely to thwart the government on all sides or to delay the passage of bills, then rejoicing in accusing the government of having failed to introduce a measure to give millions of dollars to the western producers, as suggested in this motion, is certainly not the way to do it.

I do not wish to engage in a legal discussion as to whether the government failed to assume its responsibilities by withholding certain payments. There was a fairly fierce and negative opposition, and on the part of some members, there was an opposition I could describe as a filibuster. I do not believe I am going too far in saying that attempts were made to prevent the passage of Bill C-244 for reasons related, I think, to some provincial directives.

I am not a westerner, but I heard about certain things. I can certainly not approve of the attitude of members who blame the government today for having failed to pay grants. The government attempted, with a new bill, to provide important benefits. One was justified in believing that the opposition would willingly approve of the bill, would discuss it surely in a normal way. The member who knows what he has to do, in the opposition,