

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, I think the grain farmer realizes, in setting the initial price, that we often take the recommendations of the Canadian Wheat Board into account. In March of this year we set it at \$3 for this year. We did so in March, 1977, for the past crop year. In both cases the government was taking significant risk regarding the possible deficit in those pools and was not advised by the Canadian Wheat Board to reach for so high a price. Prices have moved upward and are at a higher level now. I am glad about that. We will make every effort we can in the international negotiations under way to assure fair returns for our farmers from the international marketplace. That is where the farmer would most like to achieve it.

However, in the alternative we have available such things as the grain stabilization plan, for which the Conservatives fought so bitterly for so many years, and which this year has paid out \$115 million to prairie farmers.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** Mr. Speaker, in so far as the grain stabilization plan is concerned, the minister and those connected with him gave farmers a ride. The Minister of Agriculture said that the farmers would secure a further payment from \$110 million to \$140 million. When the payment was made, it was \$55 million. In other words, farmers were taken for a ride, and the last thing the minister should do is boast about the success of that particular plan.

**Mr. Lang:** Mr. Speaker, earlier it was made clear in the House that any reference by the Minister of Agriculture to the final payment under the scheme which farmers would receive was to the total payment they would receive.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** No.

**Mr. Lang:** I made that clear, and that was very clear in everything said. Once again, it is quite wrong for the right hon. member for Prince Albert to attempt to perpetrate or put forward the notion that somehow an unfairness is being done to a sector of our economy. That is not so.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** It is so.

**Mr. Lang:** The House and the government, through the grain stabilization plan, hopper cars and railway rehabilitation, have done things such as the right hon. member never dreamed of.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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#### PRIVILEGE

MR. BAKER (GRENVILLE-CARLETON)—McDONALD COMMISSION

**Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, earlier in the question period there was an exchange between the hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark), the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), the hon. member for Perth-Wilmot (Mr. Jarvis), and the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). It

#### *Point of Order—Mr. S. Knowles*

involves an apparent contradiction in what was said to the House by the Prime Minister, what was said through him today by the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Goyer), what was said on former occasions by the Minister of Supply and Services, and alleged testimony given before the McDonald commission today. This raises very serious questions affecting the privileges of members of the House. In order to watch the universe unfold, I should like to reserve the right to raise this question of privilege at a later time.

**Mr. Diefenbaker:** It cannot be done now because the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has left.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I am not sure the nature of the question raised by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) is sufficiently clear to warrant it being classified as a question of privilege. In any case, if it relates to contradiction in testimony now before a commission or in answers given in the House, or something of that sort, the matter can be raised when the hon. member has been provided with an opportunity to examine the record. If there is any argument about procedural matters, in terms of raising it at the first opportunity, the hon. member certainly can refer to his remarks today.

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#### POINTS OF ORDER

MR. KNOWLES (WINNIPEG NORTH CENTRE)—ANSWER GIVEN BY PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. From time to time questions have been raised in the House concerning the role, authority, and responsibility of parliamentary secretaries.

For the most part we accept answers given by parliamentary secretaries as being the answers of their ministers. But today we received an answer from a parliamentary secretary which has very serious implications. Even the parliamentary secretary said that he was answering on behalf of the deputy minister, the Deputy Postmaster General in this instance. The suggestion was that a threat of wholesale dismissal was hanging over postal workers. How can we know, Mr. Speaker, in light of the concern that has been expressed in the past about the authority of parliamentary secretaries, whether that announcement was just a departmental answer or whether it represents the deliberate policy of the government?

• (1522)

**Mr. D. M. Collenette (Parliamentary Secretary to Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that I did not convey this properly in the answer, but this is government policy. The minister made the announcement in his speech in Toronto at lunch today. Under the Public Service Employment Act, it must be the Deputy Postmaster General who notifies, in writing, the Public Service Commission of any intention to deem jobs abandoned within the employ of the public service.