

Supply—Finance

traditional procedure of making announcements I had no choice but to stand up and let him know that not only do we not like it in parliament but thousands of people across this country feel that a fair chance is not being given for the expression of their interests in this house.

Mr. Greene: Would the hon. member permit a question? I just want to be sure that the record is straight, as I know that the hon. member with his high reputation would want it to be clear that the whole and entire truth was on the record. Does the hon. member state that it was not the wheat board which sold wheat to China during his term of office but that it was he himself who effected the sale?

Mr. Hamilton: I will tell the Minister of Agriculture that as one who preceded him in office I have no choice but to support him in everything worth while that he does. I want to thank him for speaking up for the farmers on his trip west, but please do not get mixed up in something you do not know too much about.

Mr. Greene: I take it the hon. member does not wish to answer that question and I hope the record so indicates.

● (4:30 p.m.)

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Chairman, I would be surprised if this feud between the spokesmen for the Liberal and Conservative parties continued for a lengthy period. It has been going on for about two years but unfortunately it has resulted in no clarification. However, I hope that discussions such as this may lead to a review of the Act with a view to redefinition of the relationship between the wheat board and the government.

From a cursory reading of the legislation I understand the wheat board is a crown agency, autonomous in its day to day operations but subject to some degree of government policy direction. I believe there should be a redefinition because there is a great deal of misunderstanding and misapprehension in the minds of the public about the relationship of the board to the government. That should not be surprising since obviously there is misunderstanding among members of the committee.

The misunderstanding and misapprehension are so great that when some people, particularly urban dwellers, read about interim and final payments being made to wheat producers they think these payments are in the nature of a government subsidy. Why does this kind of misunderstanding

[Mr. Hamilton.]

arise? It must be because of misleading statements issued by the minister's office which are picked up by the press and headlined as final payments emanating from the government treasury. If the Minister of Finance has any desire to clarify the true relationship between the board and the government, and I believe he has, I wish him well in his task.

As its major function the wheat board has the task of selling wheat and other grain. How do the cabinet and the government enter into this function? It seems to me the board is entitled to assistance in arranging for long-term credits and things of that sort.

I find I must agree with the last speaker that up until 1960 or thereabouts Canadian governments were not prepared to back the wheat board substantially enough to provide long-term credit for prospective customers. That is why the board found it so difficult to carry out its work. To be fair and candid about the matter, I must give credit where it is due and it is due to the Conservative minister of agriculture and his colleagues in that as a matter of policy they arranged for long-term credit for prospective large customers such as China.

On the other hand, after giving such credit to the former minister I must say the impression left with western grain producers, I think almost deliberately, was that the sale to China was due entirely to the work of the Conservative government and in particular of its minister of agriculture. In fact, many people still hold that view, and I think it is noble of the present minister to avoid trying to take personal credit for any large scale sales. This is as it should be. But he should be frank and admit that prior to 1960 the board was not being given the kind of backing it needed at the highest political level in order to enable it to make sales.

I am sure the minister is aware that dissatisfaction among farmers in western Canada is due to the fact that prior to the 1962 election the minister's colleagues said it would be part of Liberal policy to ensure a \$2 per bushel price for wheat. I am told the Prime Minister himself promised that, and I know that one person who has since been appointed to the other place made such a statement on more than one occasion. But when the Liberal government had an opportunity to fulfil that pledge it failed to do so and later the price fell.

In fact, we have the spectacle of a provincial leader of the Liberal party sponsoring