

Withholding of Grain Payments

by substituting therefor the following words: "and this House calls on the government to pay forthwith to the Canadian Wheat Board the sums of money it is required to pay as specified in the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, the said act still being part of the law of Canada."

The amended motion would then read:

That this House, conscious that the government is bound by the laws of this Parliament as are the citizens of this country, condemns the government for its deliberate flout of the provisions of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act and this House calls on the government to pay forthwith to the Canadian Wheat Board the sums of money it is required to pay as specified in the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, the said act still being part of the law of Canada.

In conclusion, may I plead with Parliament, hon. members opposite as well as hon. members on this side of the House, that what is in issue is the very status of Parliament in the eyes of the people of Canada, the very respect for government in the eyes of the people of Canada. As conscientious Members of Parliament we cannot allow the government to break the law with impunity and to continue to break it without a word from this House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (4:00 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate the leader of the official opposition (Mr. Stanfield) for introducing at this time a motion of utmost importance for western wheat producers, and may I also congratulate the leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Lewis) for moving an amendment to clarify the situation from the legal standpoint and substitute the following words for certain others:

[English]

—this House calls on the government to pay forthwith to the Canadian Wheat Board the sums of money it is required to pay as specified in the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, the said Act still being part of the law of Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I have just come back from a trip out west where I had the opportunity of meeting farmers in northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, as well as the southern part of those provinces. In fact, I visited Weyburn, Radville, Regina, Calgary, High Prairie and Lethbridge. I met representatives of agricultural associations, among others those of the wheat producers. Everywhere, and I say this quite sincerely, I noticed that the people were not pleased at all with the government. This government is not very popular in western Canada because it does nothing concrete to help the farmers of that area.

I met farmers who are still waiting for the payments of the Canadian Wheat Board, people who have been forced to resort to banks and financial institutions to borrow rather considerable amounts at 12, 15, 18 and 20 per cent interest, while the Canadian Wheat Board is absolutely unable to help them because the government does not act on their behalf. The minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) blames the opposition. The latter demands that the \$100 million referred to in Bill C-244 be immediately distributed to farmers. The government insists and answers that the opposition is to blame if

[Mr. Lewis.]

western farmers are not paid. If we want to take the government at its word, in short if the government, which has a majority in the House, is really tired of the opposition, why does it not invoke Standing Orders 75A, 75B and 75C that were adopted last year and does it not impose a vote on Bill C-244? No! The ministers, playing politics, wander throughout the country saying: It is the opposition that is holding us back! It is the opposition that is hindering our work! Let the opposition adopt the bill, then we will be able to distribute the \$100 million.

That is truly intimidation. And this intimidation, the government believes that it will be able to convince western farmers that they will be its victims, but they are merely disgusted. Western farmers are now disgusted with the government because it does not carry out its responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I see the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) who always has something to say with regard to wheat, and I recall the time when he sat among the *Créditistes* here and spoke to us of the two-price system with regard to wheat for western farmers. His two-price system, today—

[English]

Mr. Nielsen: He is not listening to you.

Mr. Caouette: I know he is not listening, and when he does he doesn't understand.

• (4:10 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, as for his two-price system for farmers in order to help them sell their products, there has been no mention of it since he became Minister of Agriculture. When he was sitting on this side, he seemed to talk with logic but he does not have the right to do so any more and he says to farmers: Your business is good.

Mr. Speaker, when I met western producers last week, I found that the government or the Canadian Wheat Board were causing them a good many difficulties. A farmer had attempted for instance to sell wheat in another province and he was called a bootlegger. They threatened him with a heavy fine since it is forbidden to make transactions without going through the Canadian Wheat Board. When the same people ask the Canadian Wheat Board for assistance, the answer is: We cannot help you, we are waiting for instructions from Ottawa.

The people in Ottawa say: If nothing goes, the fault lies with the opposition. The aim is to make the opposition responsible and to play the political game, in order to attract farmers' votes in case there would have to be an election. I repeat what I said earlier: Farmers are not taken in by the troubles of the government. And, as it says in the motion, nothing prevents the government from using the existing legislation to give the Canadian Wheat Board the \$100 million that will enable them, in turn, to make the necessary payments to farmers who are entitled to them and will then be able to meet their obligations and solve their problems.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard some farmers complain. Everywhere in Canada we hear the same old story! Out West, quite often we hear people say: If things are not going well, it is because Ottawa gives too much money to