

something. It opened up the import market so that millions of tons of beef could come in from Australia and New Zealand further depressing prices. Hundreds and hundreds of beef producers went out of business. How can it be said that in these circumstances the government was responding to the needs of the west?

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that the former minister of transport, the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski), completed a very complicated negotiation on the Prince Rupert grain terminal. This agreement called for negotiation with the grain producers, the grain producers co-operative organizations, with railway companies, terminal elevator companies and others. The unions were involved, as were arrangements for international shipping. All this was put to bed in an agreement. But when the government changed, within a matter of days the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) caused great uncertainty with regard to that agreement all because of a mere \$12 million.

Mr. Pepin: You should consult with your own colleague.

Mr. Thacker: What is not lost in the west, perhaps because they are farmers and have time in the winter to read, is that on practically the same day as the minister was renegeing on that agreement, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Lamontagne) was awarding a \$4 billion contract the benefits of which were divided almost totally and equally between Ontario and Quebec. The implications are not lost on the people in the west where these things mean a great deal to us.

Mr. Pepin: I will invite you to the opening.

Mr. Thacker: I could go into the history of oil, and perhaps I should because of the presence of the minister of energy in the House today. On energy alone, the west has paid a huge price since 1974.

Mr. Lalonde: Not Manitoba.

Mr. Thacker: It has done that by agreement, by being very generous as Albertans are in their capacity as Canadians.

Mr. Lalonde: You are talking of Alberta.

Mr. Thacker: Well, in terms of oil, if the minister of energy insists, 80 per cent of the benefit really does come from Alberta and something less from Saskatchewan. But look at the figures. For Alberta, at last count it was \$17 billion—it would be much closer to \$18 billion now—and the Saskatchewan figure was over \$3 billion; it is probably \$3.5 billion now. Never in the history of this nation has one region been called upon to subsidize the rest to such an extent. It was done by agreement, an agreement into which the west entered. But what does Alberta receive for this unprecedented contribution? It certainly has not received any appreciation. Every article I read contains criticism. Whenever the minister of energy makes a speech, does he ever say to the people of Alberta; "You have been generous and we appreciate your contribution, and we are going to ask you for more?"

Mr. Lalonde: Yes. Read the speeches.

Two-Price Wheat Act

Mr. Thacker: I have never seen it in a speech. It has always been talk about greed and selfishness.

Mr. Lalonde: I rise on a point of order—perhaps I should raise the matter as a question of privilege. I am sure the hon. member would not wish to mislead the people of this country by making a completely false and erroneous statement—not the first he has made in his speech up to now. But I refer him to my repeated speeches; they are on record; he has copies in his office. In speech after speech I have stated that Alberta has made a tremendous contribution to this country and that we should be thankful for the contribution made by the people of Alberta and by the oil industry to the development of this country. I also pointed out, however, that Canadian taxpayers generally and the Government of Canada—

● (1550)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Lethbridge-Foothills (Mr. Thacker).

Mr. Thacker: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Lalonde) should stand in this House and tell the people of Alberta how generous they have been, because that is not the message that is getting through to the people of Alberta, and even in this—

An hon. Member: You are distorting it.

Mr. Lalonde: You are misleading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Thacker: Perhaps the problem lies with what the minister goes on to say in those speeches, because in those speeches he always goes on to tie in the fact that section 109 of the constitution is not going to be honoured in this respect, and to leave the impression that the people of Alberta are somehow being unreasonable in wanting to tie their price to 85 per cent of the Chicago price.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the minister is rising on a question of privilege, I hope it is more valid than the last one.

Mr. Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member again is committing a serious breach, I submit, of the rules of this House by accusing another member of breaching the constitution. I have stated that this government was going to respect every aspect of the BNA Act—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. With all due respect to the hon. minister, it appears to be a point of debate and hardly a matter of parliamentary privilege.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Thacker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that this is a sensitive point for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources because his appointment as minister has caused great distress throughout the west.