

*Withholding of Grain Payments*

been worrying farmers and their organizations ever since the legislation was first brought into the House.

I think that throughout this entire affair we have seen an example of government arrogance such as we have never before witnessed in Canada's history. This is the performance of a sick government, a government that has outlived any usefulness it may have had. We have a government that sorely needs to be replaced on the Canadian scene, a government that is prepared to show its contempt for Parliament and the laws of this country.

I suggest that the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board and all other ministers should very seriously reflect on the question: What will the activities of the government which are under discussion tonight do to our democratic institutions? On the other hand, there has been a notable lack of willingness by the government to do anything concrete in terms of introducing agricultural policies which involve any substantial expenditure of moneys. This is the crux of the matter. When the government unpegged the dollar they said they would assist any export industry that suffered as a result. But nothing has been done in this regard. Now that other problems in the economy have arisen we find there is all kinds of help for industry. Some of this help is justified and certainly the need exists, even though the policy of the government is sometimes inadequate. Although the need is now, there is a notable absence of policies which involve substantial or adequate expenditure of funds.

I think that the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board needs to reflect on the question: What does this do to the Wheat Board itself? He claims to be the defender of the Canadian Wheat Board. He wants it to be held up as a sound institution for western Canada. If that is the case, I can think of nothing more likely to undermine the Wheat Board and confidence in its operations than what we have been witnessing over the last few months.

The minister should have a somewhat different attitude to this question in view of his acknowledged respect for and knowledge of the law. Here we have a minister who was dean of law at the University of Saskatchewan, who held a high position of trust at that university. He is now a minister of the Crown with a responsibility to his constituency, his province and the people of Canada. Tonight he participated in the debate, and I must say I have never seen such a pathetic sight, with the minister thrashing wildly about and throwing out charges left and right about all the things that were wrong with the opposition.

The minister said he was fighting for the farmers. I suggest that if what he has been doing is fighting for the farmers, a more appropriate phrase to use might be that he is going to fight for the west to the last farmer; and if he continues in office very long we will see the last farmer in the west.

The minister then made an interesting comment; he said he would take shortcuts. I should like to know what these shortcuts are. Are they the sort of activities that we are discussing tonight which involve the failure of the government to make payment under the Temporary

Wheat Reserves Act? I notice that while the minister defended the government's action under this act—he has every right, of course, to defend the government's stand on the question—he said not one word about the failure of the government to carry out the provisions of the act while it was still in effect. There was not one word from the minister about whether the government did the right thing in not paying out this money, in view of the fact that the legislation is still on the statute books of Canada and is in force.

Then the minister made a very curious statement. He said he would gladly go to jail in the interests of the prairie farmers, or words to that effect; I believe I have quoted him accurately. I suggest that he should be very careful about making statements like that, because more and more farmers in western Canada are beginning to feel the same way. They are beginning to feel that if the minister were given a comfortable, well-padded and upholstered cell in jail, their interests would be well served.

To indicate just how badly mixed-up the minister is in dealing with the present situation, he referred to a statement emanating from a recent conference held by the Progressive Conservative party in Saskatoon which was discussing the Wheat Board and the changes that party would like to see made. As a matter of fact, I was inclined to agree with some of the minister's observations concerning the suggestions which came from that particular Conservative conference, and that in fact they would harm the Wheat Board. Then the minister suggested that the Conservative party's proposals amounted to cutting the legs and arms off the Wheat Board and making it something of a eunuch. I think this is a little difficult to imagine. I know of no creature, alive or otherwise, the legs and arms of which you could cut off and turn into a eunuch.

I think the minister has lost all credibility in the present situation. He has become irrelevant to the political scene of western Canada and Canada as a whole. Otherwise, I cannot see how the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board could stay in the cabinet and condone the action of the government in not making these payments. Perhaps his presence in the cabinet really does not count for much.

It is also suggested that the minister should resign from the government, though I do not think this would matter a great deal. I would be inclined to leave the minister where he is for the balance of this Parliament. I think that the voters of Saskatoon-Humboldt will do a very good weeding-out job at the next federal election. Really, I feel a little sympathy for the minister.

Questions are asked in the House from time to time about when the leave of absence of the minister from the University of Saskatchewan, where as I say he was dean of law, expires. I know that some time ago the University of Saskatchewan appointed a new dean of law, a very good one I might add, so that the minister has no job to go back to anyway. In all honesty, I cannot imagine any self-respecting school of law or university appointing him to its faculty when he has served as a minister in a

[Mr. Burton.]