

*Withholding of Grain Payments***AFTER RECESS**

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks we have had the opportunity of discussing on several occasions the subject matter to which this particular amendment is directed. I am just as sorry to see the performance of the minister speaking in this House on behalf of the Wheat Board on this occasion as I have been on previous occasions. Just as in the previous debate, the arguments on this occasion have not been, as they were when we were discussing Bill C-244, whether or not western agriculture is better served by the implementation of that bill but, rather, whether or not a minister of the Crown has the right to break the law, as it is contended is the case. During all this debate the minister has not stood in the House and declared that he did not break the law. However, he has said that if certain things happen it may be necessary after a certain period of time again to apply the law.

I suggest that this is the kind of issue that probably can be settled only by an election. Obviously we are building up to that. If we had a minority government, I presume that we would sit down and decide the merits of Bill C-244. But I suggest that some of the members on the opposite side who have been talking about a majority are advising the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that he should fight an election over this issue. Once the opposition has decided that the government is not going to obey the laws of the land, once they believe that the government has decided to call on its backbenchers to support the government be it right or wrong—it has on a number of occasions since I have been here—the only way to settle the issue probably is to take it to the country.

We are not now debating any agricultural issue. The issue we are discussing is how the members of the government can justify allowing a cabinet member to break the law without themselves becoming concerned about it. There are many lawyers on the other side of the House. They have studied law and are well aware how the law as we know it has developed over the years. However, I do not think there would be one of them who, having taken even an elementary course in law, would not agree that anyone who has been trained in the law pledges himself to support that law. If he does not, then he is excommunicated, or whatever it is they do to lawyers who do not toe the line; and I suggest that a lot of excommunications can take place.

Mr. Boulanger: Come on, talk to us about Schreyer in Manitoba.

Mr. Peters: I would be happy to talk about my former room-mate, Ed Schreyer, but I do not see in what way he has anything to do with the issue we are discussing today or with the majority over there who have decided to break the law. If the Premier of another province breaks the law, I am sure the official opposition in the province would feel the same way I do, namely, frustrated knowing that the government cannot operate because the rules do not operate.

I do not understand this minister. He is sensitive, there is no question of that. He is well learned and highly

[Mr. Korchinski.]

educated, or is reputed to be so. But obviously he has gone along with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and several other cabinet members who have declared that this legislation is so important to agriculture, from their point of view, that it should be put through the House come what may. At one time a Conservative government tried to do this and got itself into serious trouble. The Liberals tried it once before and they, too, got into serious difficulty. Both occasions concerned tax legislation and in both cases the government had pretty well run the gauntlet of its particular Parliament and had reached the stage when the law and the supremacy of this institution were no longer important.

The House leader is well versed in the law. He sits in the cabinet. With his knowledge of the operation of Parliament I would be surprised if he does not see the dissolution of this Parliament as a result of the government's action in refusing to obey the law. If the opposition decides that nothing the government does is honest, forthright or legal, then we might as well face the problem right now.

• (8:10 p.m.)

Mr. Skoberg: They want a one-party system.

Mr. Peters: This minister responsible for the Wheat Board is not only guilty of breaking the law and agreeing to break the law—

Mr. Hogarth: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Hogarth: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Peters: Certainly.

Mr. Hogarth: Where is it the responsibility of this minister to proceed under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, this minister being Otto Lang? Where is his responsibility under that act? Where did he break the law?

Mr. Alexander: You are nit-picking.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, the operation of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act is under the Wheat Board. Its operation provides that the money must be paid to the Wheat Board on a monthly, pro rata basis. This minister is responsible for the Wheat Board. The Wheat Board normally—

Mr. Hogarth: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Would the hon. member resume his seat. Unless the hon. member who has the floor wishes to receive questions we should allow him to proceed with his speech.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I shall answer the second question as soon as I finish answering the first. Monthly payments are made once the total in the system reaches 112 million bushels, and the minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) has the responsibility of billing the government for each of those additional bushels of wheat. That amounts to about 9 or 10 cents a bushel. These payments are pro rated and when due the request is made