

We also have the testimony before the House of Commons Agriculture Committee. The commissioners of the Canadian Wheat Board made it clear they had carried out their responsibility in informing the government as to what they expected from the government under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. They made it clear they considered that act still to be in force. Mr. Treleaven, the assistant chief commissioner, appeared before the committee on June 10 and stated, as recorded at page 8 of volume 58 of the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence:

Based on the commercial stocks of wheat on July 31, an accounting was submitted to the government and an invoice to the government, for the amount of the payment. Now that total payment would then be prorated over two pools. The one that was immediately finished and the one that was coming or the current pool. We have done that, of course, this year in the normal manner, but we have not received any funds from the government with respect to the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act.

Later on he made other comments, making this perfectly clear, and I quote from page 58:10 of the same volume:

—at the beginning of each crop year we determine the amount of money payable by the government to the Wheat Board under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. The government then pays that sum in 12 equal monthly instalments to us over the crop year.

He goes on to give some information about the mechanics of the operation of this act. We also have Bill C-244 before us at this time. Clause 33 of that bill provides for the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, and it will be acknowledged that the bill is still before the House of Commons. It has not received the approval of the House or the other place, and it has not received Royal Assent. We are aware also of the fact that the Canadian Wheat Board, in the absence of any payment under this act, has made a payment to the producers which it considers to be the final payment for the 1969-70 crop year, and this has occurred without any response from the government to the invoice submitted.

Of course, we all know what has taken place over the last week when this subject has been raised on a number of occasions by members of the opposition. First of all, on September 9 two motions were made under Standing Order 26, one by the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) and the other by the member for Saskatchewan-Biggar. They both requested an emergency debate on the failure of the government to make necessary payments to the Canadian Wheat Board.

On Monday, September 13 a question of privilege was raised by my colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). Had his question of privilege been allowed, this matter would have been placed before the House of Commons, enabling the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections to consider it and make a report. On that same day during the question period, I asked a question of the minister in charge of the Wheat Board. My question was:

Since the government is following a course of action which assumes that clause 33 of Bill C-244 providing for the repeal of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act is now in effect, is the government considering following the same course of action

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with respect to clause 32 of that bill by paying out the 100 million provided for transitional payments in that bill?

The minister said he could not make these payments until Bill C-244 had passed. It seems to me there is a need for the minister to be more consistent in his actions. If this situation applies to one clause of the bill, it should certainly apply to the other.

We then had an astounding statement from the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. I asked him whether, in fact, a legal opinion had been obtained as to the propriety of the government's action and the minister answered as recorded at page 7748 of *Hansard*:

We have obtained an opinion on the question of the requirement to repay the money should it have been paid and should Bill C-244 subsequently be passed.

It is amazing that a former law professor and a dean of law did not ask for a legal opinion on the question of whether a payment should still be made to the Canadian Wheat Board, taking into account the fact that the act is still in effect.

On Friday, September 9 other questions were directed to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). I asked him whether he had obtained a legal opinion on the question of whether he should make payments to the Canadian Wheat Board, as required under that act. He indicated that there would be no such legal opinion obtained or asked for in this regard. He answered in a very flippant manner by saying:

Not to me, no, Mr. Speaker.

And later he said:

Not for me personally, Mr. Speaker, but I shall inquire.

The latter, when I asked a further question about the fact that the Canadian Wheat Board had invoiced the government for this amount, his answer indicated that he did not know what was going on in his own department. I think this is indicated by the fact he has not made the payments required under the act, so the Minister of Finance should resign forthwith. I think the Minister of Finance long ago outlived any possible usefulness of service to the people of Canada.

● (10:20 p.m.)

Many questions are being raised in western Canada about the present situation. I could quote at length an editorial that appeared in the *Western Producer* on Thursday, August 12, which outlined the situation very fully and put forward a course of action for the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. I would recommend this article for his consideration and wonder whether he has in fact read it. Part of this editorial reads as follows:

The government's course of action seems clear enough: pay out the entire \$61 million now to the Canadian Wheat Board, in accordance with the terms of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act. Then, when the House goes back into session, separate the \$100 million from Bill C-244 and pay that out with all possible haste in line with the acreage payment proposed.

The next move should be another hard look at C-244 as it stands, and more discussion on some of its terms that have