

Withholding of Grain Payments

My advice is that the minister should obey the laws of Canada. If he does, he will have no complaint from us. Pay the farmers of Canada their just dues. I wish the minister would take his own advice in respect of trying to shelve the responsibility for his own delinquency by blaming the opposition, telling us that we have failed the government again in their hour of need.

We want the government to obey the law of Canada and give the farmers what is justly theirs. If the minister wants to do that by splitting Bill C-244, I cannot speak for the whole party but I can say for myself that I am willing to give my support to any bill which gives the farmers what is due to them. There is no doubt about their need. The price of machinery is high and costs of all kinds are increasing. Their overhead is not going down. Wages, gasoline and taxes are all increasing and the farmer is stuck in the middle. Just pay your honest bills, and that will be a good start.

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): I have a feeling that, as the hon. member who spoke previously said, this is an historic debate. As a new member I feel privileged to be able to take part in it. Many fine speeches have been made here tonight. I have neither the rhetorical brilliance of the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) nor the rhetorical and legal standing of the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams). However, I should like to say that in the constituency I represent we have an historic respect for the traditions of Parliament. We pay our bills and we respect the law.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: As a new member, perhaps I have come to this House full of idealism. This is natural when coming to such a hallowed institution, as was stated so ably by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale). I was quite shocked, therefore, when I realized today for the first time that this administration does not seem to share the sentiments I thought I would find here of paying your bills and respecting the law. It seems to me that these two qualities I have mentioned are fundamental to the traditional qualities of Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacKay: I am shocked that they are absent from this most hallowed of all institutions in this country. I think it was Oscar Wilde, that famous English humourist, who once said in respect of the habit of the English gentry of hunting the fox, it was a case of the unspeakable pursuing the inedible. Here I seem to detect traces of the indefensible being justified by the irresponsible. I suggest, with all deference and respect to the hon. minister, that he is irresponsible, because he knows better. As a man who is an academic of some renown, a minister of the Crown and a man with legal training, I am sure that in his heart he knows better than this. I am disappointed to find this attitude here. But I wonder, Mr. Speaker, after digging back in my memory to the 1956 pipeline and other contentious issues that have arisen to capture the attention of this country in the meantime, if this is not the hallmark of Liberal administrations.

[Mr. Bigg.]

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that what we have here tonight is basically a simple issue, as was brought out so ably by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). We have a Canadian statute, duly passed by the Parliament of this country, calling upon the government to pay moneys justly due to large numbers of citizens of this country. That has not been done.

• (1:30 a.m.)

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) in his great experience and wisdom questioned the minister about why it was not done. What did we get? We got irrelevancy and evasion. One need not be very astute to recognize these for what they are. We did not come here tonight to listen to a history of the Wheat Board or to politically-expedient statements from the minister about what this administration has done in the past, about great wheat sales that they ostensibly have made and hope to make in the future. We came to get answers. Unfortunately, we did not get many answers tonight from the other side of the House.

The Coutts Hallmark people have a saying, "We care enough to send the best." It seems to me that the Liberal administration which is governing this country did not care enough to send the best tonight. Indeed, they did not care to send very many people at all. Much of what I should like to say tonight has been said by hon. members more experienced and talented than me. I would be remiss in my responsibilities to my constituents if I did not go on record this evening as supporting the efforts made by my colleagues and compatriots from the western part of the country who seek justice for their constituents who are affected by this situation. As many hon. members have said, beyond that there is a question of fundamental principle, the principle that those who are instrumental in creating the law and in imposing the law should also be instrumental in obeying the law.

It seems to me, as the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) has said, that any government anticipating that a certain important legislative measure will be passed and carrying out what will be the end result of the legislation is presumptuous to the highest degree. "Anticipatory autocracy" seems to be a far more accurate description of the government's attitude than the much heralded term "participatory democracy".

It seems to me that statistics can support almost anything—especially statisticians. I think the government has refined the art of juggling statistics, forecasts and figures to an unparalleled degree. Indeed, they have refined their talents in this regard to a far greater extent than they have refined their talents for governing this nation in perilous times.

I do not intend to say much more, since the hour grows late. I would say, with all deference, that the important message has already been put across to the people of this country. I wish to echo the sentiments of the hon. member who preceded me and advise the minister to not delay any longer and to pay to the people of this country what is justly theirs under legislation passed for their benefit by their representatives.