

Withholding of Grain Payments

the farmers. Why does this government hate farmers? Why is it so blunt and so contemptuous? Farmers are not stupid today. They know very well that the money under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act is due and payable to them. They know they are being forced into taking Bill C-244. Farmers also know that the two ministers concerned, the minister in charge of the Wheat Board and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) are only playing politics. They also know that the minister in charge of the Wheat Board is supposed to be the custodian of the farmers' interests when it comes to purchasing, shipping, storing and the marketing of wheat. But the present minister has sold the farmer down the river. The Wheat Board is supposed by statute to act in the best interest of the farmer. Under the present minister this has not been achieved. I say: what a shame.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner), as my hon. friend from Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) pointed out, are both in the same boat. But certainly one would expect that the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, coming as he does from the Province of Saskatchewan, would be more sympathetic towards farmers than he has shown himself to be tonight. He has acknowledged that farmers are critically short of cash, then he cripples them further by failing to distribute these funds. These funds should have been distributed last June. The Minister of Agriculture has not provided leadership either, as was apparent from the terms of the Employment Support Bill to which the House gave second reading last week. He knows very well that 1970-71 has been a bad year, yet all we hear are statements about the grandiose sales the ministers have been making. All that really matters is how much grain farmers have been able to market. Let me repeat statistics which have been prepared by the Alberta Wheat Pool which indicate that marketing for 1970-71 was the lowest in 15 years with the exception of one year, and at the lowest prices. It is no wonder we are experiencing a massive exodus of farmers from their land. They have to contend with the weather, with the depredations of insects and with the effects of international competition, yet the minister sits back and smiles and the Minister of Agriculture joins him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired. He may continue, of course, if he has unanimous consent. Does the House give unanimous consent to the hon. member for Vegreville to pursue his remarks?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Mazankowski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. members. I will conclude as quickly as I can. The minister of Agriculture and the minister responsible for the Wheat Board sit back in their places and smile because this is their way of solving the agriculture problem by removing two-thirds of the farmers from the land. I call it occupational genocide. I say that this government's farm programs are a total flop. The minister in charge of the Wheat Board knows this, the Minister of Agriculture

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

knows this and all the western Liberal members know this as well. I do not know why they do not admit it and scrap these socialistic and bureaucratic schemes created with the aid of bureaucratic economists sitting on high in their ivory towers. Why do they not scrap these programs? Let me tell you why they do not. They just do not care about the farmer, and neither does the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). Let me conclude on this note, Mr. Speaker. These two junior ministers are merely serving as puppets to the Trudeau régime.

● (10:10 p.m.)

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, there are two issues in this debate we are engaged in tonight; one is the flouting of the law by the government and the other is the failure of the government to live up to its responsibilities to the prairie grain producers in respect of their income needs. I think this is reflected by the motion I moved today, seconded by the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), on behalf of the NDP, in which we asked for consideration of this question, namely the urgent need for the government to make payments to the Canadian Wheat Board as specified in the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act of 1956 so that an immediate improvement can be made in the economic position of western farmers.

Let me deal with the basic issue which is the first point I mentioned, the flouting of the law by the government. There can be little argument over the facts of the matter. The Temporary Wheat Reserves Act was passed in 1956 by the Parliament of Canada and was given Royal Assent. That act provides that the Minister of Transport shall, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, pay to the Canadian Wheat Board for each day in that crop year and in each crop year an amount equal to the portion of the said stocks that exceed 178 million bushels at the commencement of that crop year, multiplied by the carrying charge rate paid by the Board at the end of an immediately preceding crop year. The act goes on to provide in section 4 the moneys payable to the Board by the minister under this act shall be paid in a certain manner. It provides that the total amount payable for the crop year shall be paid in equal monthly instalments in such a crop year. There are absolutely no equivocations about the terms of the act, and there are no options or loopholes for the minister or the government.

We also have the acknowledgement by the government that it has indulged in this practice of evasion, and that in fact it has failed to make the necessary payments to the Canadian Wheat Board. The government has not even undertaken to defend its position. When I asked a question in the House of Commons whether or not these payments had been made to the Canadian Wheat Board, I was given the following answer to question No. 1,469 on the order paper:

Although funds were appropriated in the estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1972, expenditures have not been authorized because the government has a bill before the House to rescind the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act effective August 1, 1970.