

Withholding of Grain Payments

ernment has made light of the House of Commons and the rules of this House; there have been other occasions when the government has flouted the law. One example occurred when it produced the Blue Book of Estimates. If ignored an existing government department, the Department of Fisheries, because it was at that time the government's intention to abolish that department although the bill had not been passed making that change. Mr. Speaker, the law is not based on intentions; it is based on proper procedures. Changes in the law do not come about until the proper procedures have been followed. If those proper procedures have been ignored, we are no longer living under the rule of law in this country. That surely is one danger in the precedent.

This debate has a significance that goes far beyond this particular law, important as it is to the people concerned. We are going right to the heart of our parliamentary institutions; we are going right to the heart of political democracy. Mr. Speaker, this is the most dangerous single event or precedent that I have seen in Parliament in my day.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: It is tragic that the precedent does not bother the minister. The attitude of these ministers is, in effect, to admit that they are lawbreakers but to deny that they have done anything wrong. If that is the case, by what right does this government presume to punish others who break the law, Mr. Speaker?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: By what right does it pass judgment on individual Canadians who come before the courts? If the government can break the law why can others not break the law, Mr. Speaker? Surely, the government is giving an example to everybody in the country. It is what you can get away with that counts as far as this government is concerned. In acting as it has the government has not only downgraded the law, it has forfeited the respect of the Canadian people.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: I realize that this government does not like opposition. It finds opposition a nuisance. But I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is the opposition that today is preserving the honour of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: This government would like to use Parliament as a sausage grinder to turn out its own legislation. I think we are showing today that as far as the opposition is concerned, we have no intention of allowing that to happen. Furthermore, we are here to defend Parliament and through Parliament the right of Canadians and we are here to defend the law.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: If the government persists, it will have to answer to this Parliament and it will have to answer to all Canadians for the consequences. By its present attitude the government is endangering the orderly conduct of business in this House. That may not seem important to

some members of this government, but I think it is important to the great majority of Members of this Parliament, whatever their party stripe happens to be.

Regardless, Mr. Speaker, of what some members of the present government may think and regardless of what the present Prime Minister may think, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law are bigger than any one or all of us sitting here now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: That is our purpose in bringing this matter forward; that is our purpose today and we intend to keep fighting until we succeed or until this government goes down the drain where it belongs.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, it is possible for the minister or the government to play with words about what is now before the House. It is possible to try to play things down—"we intended to repeal it so what are you making a fuss about?" I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) has properly put to this House, what this House is now discussing is basic to our system of government and is basic to democracy anywhere in the world.

Mr. Stanfield: Right.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: I ask you to note Mr. Speaker that the Prime Minister of this country was a teacher of law, that the Minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) was a Dean of Law teaching law students the importance of observing the law, and they are now responsible for breaking it without conscience and without reason.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: Everytime the Prime Minister has the opportunity to make a speech, particularly to young people in Canada, and I don't have to produce quotations, he tells them that our system is based on law and order. He boasts of the fact that Canada is a democracy where people are intended to obey the law; he boasts of the fact that he is strong enough to make people obey the law. However, when it suits this government's purpose, a purpose which is evil, then unhesitatingly they break the law and say to the opposition and the farmers of Canada, "If you don't like it you can lump it".

• (3:40 p.m.)

What the government is doing seems to me to be particularly reprehensible, unpalatable and unpleasant because it takes advantage of the fact that a particular act, the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act, brings the money to the farmer in a roundabout way. The money initially goes to the Wheat Board. The party directly affected is the Wheat Board. Because the Wheat Board is under the jurisdiction of the Minister in Charge of the Wheat Board it is not likely to take action against the government, either by laying a charge under section 115 of the Criminal Code against the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) for failing to do his duty as an act requires him to do which might not land him in jail I suppose but in some place that the dean of law said he is ready to go, or to issue a writ