

Withholding of Grain Payments

Mr. Lang: Why don't you give the reference?

Mr. Macquarrie: This is the first sentence of the book which the hon. minister edited some years ago.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A "Lang" time ago.

Mr. Macquarrie: There has been talk about the minister's legal background, Mr. Speaker. I do not hold that against him but no member of this Parliament, no person nurtured in the tradition of parliamentary democracy, has to be told that our system can only work when we have a government of laws and not of men; that the temporary administrators cannot set aside the law and expect that the system will work. I would advise this minister to remember that.

An hon. Member: For Auld "Lang" Syne.

Mr. Macquarrie: It is a government of laws and not of men; however confident the men may be, however filled with their own importance they may be, the law is what prevails.

In his speech the minister did make a very fine statement when he said "I owe a tremendous debt". This government does, so let them pay it. I hope he will forget politics and not engage further in this—some said "offensive" but I did not think it was offensive, I think it was defensive—tirade. I think he saw the same public opinion poll as I did which shows that in Assiniboia, the Conservatives are leading, the Liberals are second and the New Democratic Party third. But this is not what we are talking about tonight, Mr. Speaker.

I would say to the minister: recall this important debate and what was said by eloquent members like the hon. member for Calgary North and those who followed him. Let the minister remember that with all his troubles, and he is in a troubled portfolio whichever way he turns, he has an obligation to pay the Wheat Board and the farmers. He has to obey the law and function in this House as one who knows that this House is supreme. The power which he exercises rests upon the power of this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, it is a difficult task to follow the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). The words that he had for the House, and for the hon. Minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, should be taken to heart. When he speaks about the law, surely the minister will realize that the hon. member is referring to him. I suggest that when the minister gave his discourse he was talking about contemptible action on the part of the opposition. If any contemptible action was taken by any elected member of the House, I suggest it was taken by the minister in May. The *Leader-Post* of May 29 reported:

● (12:10 a.m.)

Otto Lang, minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board, said Friday he expects the grains income stabilization plan will become law before June 23.

I suggest that the magic date, June 23, meant something to the minister. He was not concerned about what happened under the stabilization plan; he only wanted to get cash into the pockets of some farmers and he thought some of the money would go to farmers in the province from which he and I come. I think every organization representing the farming population has opposed this bill, and the minister is well aware of that. He knows that the three wheat pools, the Federation of Agriculture, the National Farmers Union, the United Grain Growers and the Unifarm organization in Alberta have opposed the bill in its entirety and will oppose it until there is clarification of its provisions.

The minister suggested we are trying to filibuster the bill. We have only tried to obtain answers from him. There is one area we ought to be concerned about. The government is encouraging the exodus of the farm population from the land and the amalgamation of farm units into more efficient sizes. Repeatedly we have asked the government what its plans are for changing the present farm units to units of more efficient size, and what this will mean to the farming population. The government has not said what this program will mean. It means that farmers will be moved off the small family farm, and the minister knows it.

As recently as last week I asked people in the farming community to put themselves in my place as a Member of Parliament and to say whether or not they would vote for the stabilization plan. The answer was a resounding no; they would not vote for it until they had information as to what the minister means when he says that he wishes to encourage farm units to become units of a more efficient size.

The minister should know that the so-called grain payments and the carrots being held in front of producers' noses will do little to ease the grain space situation. We need measures to offset any lack of elevator space. Nobody wants to plug the pipeline, as the elevator system is known. At the same time, no substitute has been put forward for the storage of grain. There has been no answer as to who will bear the cost of the extra storage which is necessary or what will replace payments under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act which paid for part of the storage available in elevators.

This evening the minister spoke about the opposition being obstructionist. Back on May 10 I placed on the order paper the following question concerning the Wheat Board and the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act:

- 1) Are payments being made on a monthly basis to the Canadian Wheat Board under the provisions of the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act?
- 2) If so, are the payments still being made?
- 3) If not, why not?

That question was placed on the order paper on May 10 last. On September 8 the minister's department saw fit to answer it. No action of the government could be more contemptible than that, because the attempt was made, I suggest, to deceive producers completely. The government's action, or lack of it, consisted in no answer being forthcoming until then to a simple question. I am concerned, as are the producers. We want answers from the