

*Withholding of Grain Payments*

acted as though the law in question had been repealed, even though in fact it has not been repealed.

This brings me to a third member of this conspiracy, the—

**Mr. Nielsen:** The Prime Minister.

**Mr. Stanfield:** We must not overlook the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) on the way to the Prime Minister. In spite of the fact that this law has not been repealed but remains as the law of this country, it is absent from the *Revised Statutes of Canada* for 1970. That is bad enough, Mr. Speaker, but what is worse, as the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) has already pointed out, is that there is a note in Appendix "A" to the *Revised Statutes of Canada* to the effect that this law has already been repealed. Certainly that Appendix is in no sense a legal document, but it is a document of information.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is clearly an attempt to deceive the Canadian people as to what the real situation was and still is, and that, in turn, is part of this conspiracy, not merely by some of its members but by the whole government, to break the law of this country. So we have something more than a sin of omission: we have three members of the government—indeed, we have the government itself—conspiring to break the law of this country. I say that this could never have happened without the approval and authorization of the head of that government, the Prime Minister of this country, and he must accept that responsibility.

This is a serious charge, Mr. Speaker. The government has not denied the charge because it cannot deny it. The best it has done, so far at least, is to accuse the opposition of not co-operating with it in the passage of a new law. That, Sir, is the reasoning of arrogance. It is the reasoning of Louis XIV. Instead of it being Louis XIV saying "L'État, c'est moi," in this case it is the Prime Minister of Canada saying "La loi, c'est moi"—"The law is me". "I am the law", says the Prime Minister. That may have been acceptable in 17th century Europe, but it is not acceptable in Canada in the year 1971. At least, it is not acceptable to the Canadian people or their representatives in this Parliament, regardless of what some of the hon. gentlemen opposite may happen to think.

We are discussing here the guilt of the whole government, a government that is blinded by its own arrogance and indifference. We have known for some time that this government was contemptuous of Parliament. The members of the government have shown this in their words and their deeds. Hon. gentlemen opposite say they are in a hurry; they find parliamentary debate too slow and too uncertain for their liking.

In the past few years there have been some changes made in our parliamentary procedures designed essentially to expedite the business of the House—that is, the governmental business of the House—and presumably government opportunities for taking action. Under the old rules government estimates could be held up virtually indefinitely by members of the opposition. This situation had been changed before I arrived in this House. When I arrived here there was a limited time for discussion of estimates in the House, and I must say I was shocked to see one consequence of this, which was that ministers

[Mr. Stanfield.]

answered only those questions put to them on the estimates that they chose to answer, and to the extent that they chose to answer them. When ministers did not give a satisfactory answer there was absolutely no way in which members of the opposition could obtain one, because once time expired the motion was put and the estimates were passed.

I am not arguing today that we should go back to the old rules, though doubtless some members would be prepared to do so. But what I am saying is that since the estimates were taken out of the House—indeed, since a time limit has been put on even debating estimates in the House—the opposition has lost any method it had of compelling a member of the government to give information to this House. Obviously, the members of the opposition seem to have lost the capacity as well to compel members of the government and the government as a whole to obey the law of the land. There has been a vast reduction in the power of the House to hold the government responsible to the House.

Under the old rules, when there was virtually no limit on the extent of debate on estimates, no government of Canada would have dared to defy the law as this government has. No government would have dared to do what this government has done because if it had, it would have realized that it would never get its estimates through this House, Mr. Speaker. It would never have dared to do this.

• (3:30 p.m.)

This vast change in the relative strength of the two sides of Parliament, the government's side and the opposition's side, I say imposes upon us in the opposition a heavy duty to fight the clear breach of the law with which we are faced. On the other hand, the power of the opposition to force the government to comply with the law and behave properly, as a result of the changes in the rules to expedite business, has been reduced. Surely, this imposes a higher moral, institutional and parliamentary obligation on the government to obey the law and behave in a highly responsible manner toward the House.

The government has shown its contempt for the House. The imposition of the roster system was bad enough; there is no justification for it under the rules. When, as happened yesterday, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) was not in the House to answer serious questions that he must have anticipated would be put to him that day, surely we have reached some kind of low point. I heard the Prime Minister's explanation that the minister in question had another engagement that was important. I think that in itself shows the relative priorities that the Prime Minister and the minister attach to parliamentary obligations compared to obligations outside the House. Surely, the least that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce ought to have done in the circumstances was to see that the Prime Minister or some other minister was fully briefed on the meeting that took place with representatives of General Motors in the morning and was able to fully answer the questions in the House rather than have the Prime Minister simply say that he did not have the information.

That is the point we have come to in this House, Mr. Speaker. There have been many occasions when this gov-