

*Withholding of Grain Payments*

ment's plan to test the will of Parliament on a substitution that we considered to be a better package, immediately adding approximately \$40 million which is part of our total package, and adding a good bit more than that to the prairie farmers' income during the course of that two year period. That was introduced to test the will of Parliament.

It was clear to us from the consultations we already had with Members of Parliament that there would likely be substantial support in this House for that bill. It was never our intention to suggest that somehow neither the one set of benefits nor the other would be available to farmers. We were specifically discussing a new proposal more beneficial to farmers when compared to the law as it stood without these changes. We wanted this bill to progress through the House. I think the record on that is clear. Certain opposition members, when speaking with regard to agricultural legislation as many of them from the prairies do, take a tremendous amount of time to discuss matters irrelevant to a bill before the House and delay legislation.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Lang:** The record in the committee also makes this clear.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** You are being fatuous.

**Mr. Lang:** It is clear as well that the political fact that there was an election in Saskatchewan, and the fact that there is a pending by-election in Saskatchewan, has been in the consciousness of members of this House. At all times I asked members of this House and members of the committee to allow this issue, whether the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act should be repealed effective July 31, 1970 and there be substituted therefor this other package of proposals or the other part of the proposals composed of the stabilization bill, to come to a vote to test the will of Parliament on it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Lang:** If the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act were to be fallen back upon in place of the measures now before the House, this would mean that the payments which ordinarily would have been made to the Wheat Board for transmission to the farmers would again be made. This would have amounted to something in the order of \$62.1 million according to the most recent calculation of that figure. There have been other figures mentioned, but this one appears to be more certain. This is at the end of July. If this had been paid, \$38.6 million would, in the ordinary course, have reached the farmers during the month of June. We recognize that if the House were not to approve that significant clause in Bill C-244 that we would certainly have an obligation with regard to this legislation and to this payment and, indeed, with regard to interest on it for the period during which this payment was delayed. It appears hon. members may have been following a different course, that is, talking endlessly without any intention of letting this question come to a vote.

• (4:30 p.m.)

Let me put the issue completely before Your Honour. The government has continued to give high priority to Bill

C-244 as an item in its legislative agenda. It has called the bill despite the fact that the competing priorities are of great importance. We shall continue to seek the approval of the House for Bill C-244. Several hon. members have suggested we should use on or other technique to close off debate. But members of the government are very loath to do so, wishing normally to give the opposition a generous and full opportunity to speak. The hope is, though, that members will speak relevantly and to the point, and in due course allow a decision to be taken.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lang:** The question of the alternatives has been discussed before by members of this House. In the committee, questions were asked about what would happen if the bill were not passed as of the end of the earlier part of the session. I indicated then that if that were to happen the government would have to look again at its attempt to pass what it considered to be an improvement to the law, and consider reverting to the law as it stood, without changes being made. In other words, not to rely any longer on the passage through the House of a clause which had already been approved on second reading and in committee repealing the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act as of July 1, 1970. Should the opposition continue to prevent the House coming to a vote on this issue—filibuster, my hon. friend says, and I agree with him—should the opposition prevent this issue coming to a vote in a reasonable period, we would have no alternative but to—

**Mr. Benjamin:** Obey the law.

**Mr. Horner:** Pay your debts.

**Mr. Korchinski:** Plus interest.

**Mr. Lang:**—say to the farmers that their spokesmen in the opposition have prevented us from enacting what we consider to be an improvement in the law and we, therefore, would have to consider that Bill C-244 in all its parts was a dead issue, and, of course, immediately, at that time make the payment under the Temporary Wheat Reserves Act for that year and, indeed, for this. This would mean, Mr. Speaker—

**Mr. Lewis:** More blackmail.

**Mr. Lang:** The hon. member says "More blackmail".

**Mr. Faulkner:** The experts are speaking.

**Mr. Lang:** The leader of the New Democratic Party is, of course, very conscious of the fact that an attempt will be made by his colleagues fighting the by-election in Assiniboia to picture their obstruction of beneficial legislation for farmers as a lack of attention by this government to the problems of farmers. Where is the blackmail?

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to some tortuous sentences in my life, but never to one quite so tortuous as that.

**Mr. Lang:** To the farmers, I say as I said on March 15: We shall, of course, have to examine ways of seeking to improve the situation. We shall continue to try to bring additional measures forward to help them.