

Withholding of Grain Payments

Mr. Mazankowski: He avoided completely the issue outlined in the motion. He also reminded us of this government's arrogant acts in taking shortcuts at the expense of the farmer and at the expense of Parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: I say, Mr. Speaker, let the minister bring forward legislation that will help the farmers and not the bureaucrats, and we will support it.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: The farmers in my area are concerned about this matter. He should also tell the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) that this is not the time for flowers and that it is not the time for kisses. The farmers are sick and tired of hearing grandiose, campaigning, misleading facts such as were completely distorted by the minister in his exposé this evening. The minister talked about record sales. He again failed to tell the full story, because the producer marketings of wheat during this crop year were only 387 million bushels, the lowest total in 15 years and at the lowest price in 17 years.

• (9:50 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Mazankowski: Hon. members know very well the value of a dollar today compared to what it was 15 years ago. That is what matters; that is what is bothering the farmer. According to DBS figures, the net realized income in prairie Canada amounted to \$1.12 billion in 1966. This figure has progressively declined. In 1970 the net realized income in prairie Canada, the prairie farm economy, amounted to \$500 million. That is the kind of language the farmers understand, not the propaganda that this minister is spreading throughout the country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: The minister talked about \$60 million owing from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Here again there is an inaccuracy. It is \$61,600,000 for the crop year 1970-71, plus an additional \$26 million for the crop year 1971-72. That is closer to \$90 million, Mr. Speaker. No wonder the minister is fighting for his political life and going about the country spreading stories of this kind.

I say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I commend you on your decision to allow this debate to take place. I appreciate the fact that you gave this matter very sincere consideration. I know that those who are affected by the inadequacies of this government and the failure to discharge its responsibility will very much appreciate your ruling. I know that Canadian grain farmers will be pleased. All Canadians, even Liberals, will be pleased, especially those who have fears of being trampled on and being ridden over roughshod by this government—because, Mr. Speaker, in this debate we have a very basic and fundamental issue to consider. That issue is the deliberate and calculated failure of this government to carry out its administrative responsibility pursuant to Canadian law. That is the fact of the matter.

[Mr. Peters.]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: Over the past week or so I must admit that I have become somewhat perplexed and bewildered with the machinery of Parliament because every conceivable approach had to be taken before this matter could be brought before the House. Questions produced non-answers and attempts to adjourn in order to debate the problem were not allowed. One cannot help becoming frustrated when one understands the situation and is in touch with it every day on returning to his constituency.

If rules and procedures become so defined and so rigid that an issue of such magnitude cannot be ventilated and debated in this House, perhaps it is time for reassessment. I cannot help being reminded of the statement of a distinguished member at the Eighth Caribbean Commonwealth Conference which I had the privilege of attending. He quoted a former Speaker of the House of Commons as follows:

Today mankind has two alternatives, free and orderly discussion in Parliament with majority rule or fighting in the streets.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: If a question involving the administration of laws created by parliamentary democracy cannot be properly debated, it will be a sad day for Canada, for Parliament and for the system of parliamentary democracy. Throughout my experience in this chamber I, together with many other members of this House, have witnessed an increasing government disregard of laws established by Parliament. We have witnessed the deliberate downgrading of this institution. There are many examples of this. I am sure other members who will be participating in the debate will adequately deal with them.

Never have I seen, and never did I expect to see, a government so blatantly and contemptuously refusing to carry out its administrative duty, a duty which is imposed by Canadian statute passed by Parliament, a law which remains in force and will continue to remain in force until Parliament in its wisdom sees fit to rescind it. That is the basic issue, Mr. Speaker—not the bunch of hogwash we hear from the minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Mazankowski: That fact is so elementary that one could never have conceived that this situation could occur. It is a disgrace and a shame. After all, if governments cannot conform with the law, how in heaven's name can anyone else in society be expected to do so? The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) stated that farmers were being penalized for the inter-provincial movement of grains. They are being charged under the statutes covering the Canadian Wheat Board. The government is breaking its own law. How can society be expected to abide by laws if the government will not live up to them? This fact is so elementary, basic and fundamental that it is completely beyond my comprehension to understand the government's attitude.