

Wheat Acreage Reduction

Perhaps we shall have to cut prices, but that is the responsibility of the government and not the farmer. I submit it is the responsibility of the government. It is damned near time we got rid of McNamara who has devoted more energy, time and money to maintaining his own position than to selling wheat. Under the present commission system, agents sell to the highest bidder; furthermore, they sell whatever commodity will fetch the most money. The brokers who handle wheat are not doing a very good job for the Canadian people, and the government has over-all responsibility in this field.

Surely the minister knows what we all know, that much of western Canada will produce only wheat. Now the government is talking of putting that land in forage. Does the minister know what happens when you put land in forage? You produce hay, which must be used for feed. You cannot sell hay to China; Russia will not buy hay—you must use it for feed. If you were to put two million acres in my part of the country under hay production, pretty soon the market in Toronto would be handling 2,000 head of cattle every day from our area, and what do you think would happen to the price of beef? Dogs would be eating T-bone steaks which would sell for two cents a pound. This could happen in western Canada. That is what would happen if we acted without thinking.

The minister said the government is looking at long-term solutions. What is he talking about? The \$100 million it will make available is nothing. The minister knows what that \$100 million will be used for in the west. The farmers will use the money to buy gas, oil and repairs for their machinery. The money will not keep equipment dealers in business; it will not keep grocers in business. We hear talk about selling the wheat in storage. Mr. Speaker, if the farmer is to pay back all the money he has had advanced to him, he will need to sell wheat under a 10-bushel quota. Is it likely that the farmers will see a 10-bushel quota in the next year?

An hon. Member: Or the year after?

Mr. Peters: Even with that quota, and, assuming the farmer receives \$1.20, Mr. Speaker, 60 cents per bushel would go toward repayment and the other 60 cents for his living expenses. It is better that the farmer should go to Florida for a holiday. At least he might get a job in a gas station down there and save everyone lots of trouble. He should

[Mr. Peters.]

not go to Toronto, where they have lots of unemployment. I am saying that the government has not really looked at the problem.

The farmers in western Canada do not have the equipment to break grassland. They have not put in grassland for a long time. Only a cattle farmer would be interested in permanent pasture and grassland. I was amused by what the hon. member for Calgary North said about grass seed. My brother had a bumper crop of sweet clover last year which he was not able to sell. Maybe he will be able to sell it under this program. Maybe it will not be a loss to the farmers in eastern Canada where a lot of seed is produced.

I am interested in doing something for the people of western Canada. I am not interested in getting rid of any more farmers. Because I was curious, I asked how many people would be able to take 1,000 acres out of production and still have land for wheat. I found it applies to only a handful of people. There are very few people in western Canada with 2,000 acres of wheat. Mr. Hazen Argue suggested that my old room-mate, Merv Johnston of Kindersley, may be in that category; but we are not talking about anyone at that level.

We are not talking about \$100 million, nor are we talking about \$6 or \$10 an acre; we are talking about a totally new quota system for producing wheat in western Canada. I am told that the clergymen in every church in Regina yesterday preached against the proposal put forward by the minister. They did so on purely moral grounds. It is a shame.

I agree with those hon. members who said we should be producing our maximum. This can be done easily and with little labour in Canada. These agricultural products could be used to feed those less fortunate in the world. We are not spending any money trying to develop a method through the United Nations of getting rid of our surpluses. It is necessary for this country to establish a granary system in order to meet our needs and the needs of those less fortunate. There must be a way of doing this. I do not suggest this should be up to the farmer. If the farmer wished, he could give away all the wheat he had and then his granary would be empty and this \$100 million exercise would not be necessary. The less fortunate people in the world may have developed a liking for bread, bannock, scones or whatever they eat in different parts of the world. We have a moral responsibility to these people.