

Supply—Agriculture

work at my occupation only about six months of the year, have an annual net worth gain of approximately \$6,700, or almost twice the annual income of the average pool elevator agent, or many other members of the community who are on salary, have gathered assets to the value of approximately \$60,000 in 18 years, and lastly am eligible for most of the full amount of the proposed deficiency payments.

Now sir, this is no isolated case in this district, at least, as I can look around the neighbourhood and see dozens who are doing just as well and quite a few considerably better. In fact I am of the firm opinion that any farmer operating a section or more of land reasonably efficiently should be in no need of assistance of any kind, excepting crop failure. On the other hand, there are many smaller farmers on uneconomic units who are having difficulties.

And that is only too true. I continue:

But it would seem to me an absurdity to hand farmers such as myself the price of a new automobile from the public treasury.

Also any payments made as an increase on the price of wheat will most certainly have the effect of increasing the acreage sown. Now it has taken us five years to reduce our supplies to the point where we can see a chance of emptying our bins, and this has been done through increased sales, and acreage reduction through substitution of other crops as flax, rape, barley, oats, etc. Now an increase of 30 cents a bushel in the price of wheat will make an unfavourable ratio of about 60 cents a bushel for flax, and also rape, which simply means that considerably more wheat will be seeded, and up will go our carry-over again.

It seems to me, sir, that the government's agricultural program of crop insurance and more credit is a sound and sensible program which should put the assistance in the hands of those who do need it, and not in the hands of those like myself who are well able to buy their own cars.

Now, sir, it seems to me that it may be possible to keep the wheat surplus problem within reasonable proportions with a vigorous sales policy and by not stimulating wheat production by such acts as adding 30 cents a bushel to the price.

Also in closing may I state that I fully expect to have a substantial net worth gain over the next three years, barring natural disasters, even without deficiency payments.

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Will the minister permit a question? Has the minister by any chance had those figures checked with the figures that are on file with the Minister of National Revenue to see whether this man reported those figures last year?

Mr. Harkness: No, I did not. I am not in the habit of doubting those people's words in connection with those matters.

Mr. Argue: What about the 30,000 who disagree with him?

Mr. Harkness: In any event, Mr. Chairman, I read the letter in order to indicate, particularly to members who came from other parts of the country, that there is a considerable number of farmers in western Canada who are not at starvation's door, as some members in this house would have one believe—

Mr. Argue: Based on one letter.

Mr. Harkness:—from the statements they have made. I do not base it on one letter. I have received a very large amount of mail in connection with this matter and I should like to tell my hon. friend that during the entire time that this campaign for so-called deficiency payments for western grain was on I was getting quite a few letters every day and about three out of four were against deficiency payments. That is about the way the proportion went. As a result, I knew there was a very large body of opinion in western Canada who did not support the contentions.

To continue, Mr. Chairman, I have a note here to thank the late Omer Gour, who was the member for Russell, for the very pleasant remarks he made concerning myself. I should like to take this opportunity and pay my respects to him and to his memory. Mr. Gour and I had been friendly ever since I came into the house, now nearly 15 years ago, and I always found him an exceptionally fine gentleman from every point of view. I regret very much that I was not able to be here the day following his death so that I might have paid my respects to him in the house at that time and have been able to attend his funeral. I was always very happy to get his remarks and his opinions on agricultural matters. The remarks that he made on agriculture in his last speech here were sound as usual.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I would like to point out to the minister that we on this side of the house were all very grateful for the solicitous manner in which the minister expressed his regrets on the night of Mr. Gour's death.

Mr. Harkness: Thank you. I might say that in this speech Mr. Gour expressed some very sound ideas on vertical integration, amongst other matters.

The hon. member for Fort William spoke about the loan policy and its benefit to small farmers, as several other members have done. Since the hon. member for Timiskaming spoke on that subject this morning, all that I can say is, as all hon. members know, we have a farm credit bill which will be coming before the house fairly soon and which I think will greatly improve the credit facilities as far as our farm population is concerned.

The Chairman: I regret to interrupt the minister but his time has expired.

Mr. Habel: Go ahead.

The Chairman: Is it the pleasure of the committee that the minister be permitted to continue?