

*Wheat Acreage Reduction*

the government's announcement. I think this question should be given further consideration. In my own province of Saskatchewan a great deal of pressure has been put on the provincial economy as a result of the downfall in farm income, and I suggested that there will be even greater pressure.

The situation in Saskatchewan is reflected in the most recent population figures which show that between October 1, 1969, and January 1, 1970, the population of that province dropped by 8,000 people—from 956,000 to 948,000. In fact, from October 1, 1968, to January 1, 1970, the total drop was some 12,000 people. I think this is a reflection of the situation which the Saskatchewan economy faces. We see this evidenced in many areas in terms of retail sales, closed businesses and shops, increased unemployment and reduced capital investment.

On the other hand, we find very little in the way of alternative programs offered by the federal government in the coming year to offset this situation. We have a very poor regional development incentive program. We have nothing in the way of a public works program for Saskatchewan. Certainly, it seems to me that the federal government has not given adequate consideration to the very serious problem facing the Saskatchewan economy.

It has been suggested by the government that they will be spending in the neighbourhood of \$100 million or more on this program. I suggest this simply will not happen and, in fact, a much smaller amount will be spent. The government has, I suggest, even within its own inner circles, admitted that a much smaller accomplishment will be achieved than has been indicated. This is a short-term program. It is designed basically as an incentive to take land out of production. It is not an income maintenance program, and it seems to me the government has to be concerned with income maintenance. I suggest that we need more programs in the way of income maintenance for farmers if we are to avoid a disastrous situation.

• (11:40 p.m.)

I suggest that up to now we have had a total lack of planning of the Prairie economy in western Canada, in terms of federal government programs. I suggest the federal government has completely ignored the report which was just published by the Economic Council of Canada, written by S. C. Hudson, a

[Mr. Burton.]

well known agricultural economist, entitled, "Future Market Outlets for Canadian Wheats and other Grains." In this study he notes that on the basis of market projections for wheat over the next several years there is room for wheat acreage of some 23 million acres. That is only a 6-million acre drop from the 1968 figure.

On the other hand, he points out that by 1975 there should be a diversion of almost 8 million acres of improved land from wheat to coarse grains, forage and pasture crops, and of something over 2 million additional acres to rapeseed production. Thus, in terms of his projection the increased acreage required for coarse grains, forage, pasture crops and rapeseed production far outweighs the drop in wheat production or wheat acreage that he envisages. But we do not see this reflected in the government's program at the present time. We do not see it reflected in the manner in which the government is treating farmers under the announced program.

We are not just speaking of agriculture; we are speaking of more than just farmers: we are speaking of the prairie economy and the effects of this program on the entire economy of Canada and Canadian society. It will affect town, city and country alike. I suggest that the present situation and the plans as they have been developed can harm all of Canada.

I want to make it quite clear that we in this party are committed to the principle of orderly marketing, which is presently under attack from some quarters. Ways need to be found to improve this system in some areas, but we have to make it quite clear that the continuance of orderly marketing is critical and essential if we are to solve our present problems. We need to extend, develop and help the system as it has been developed up to the present time. But we have a ridiculous situation where the farmer has been told, "You have done such a good job of producing food over the last several years that we do not need you this year." The farmer is now expected to crawl into some gopher hole, hibernate for a year and come out in the spring of 1971.

I suggest that the government's policy, if in fact it is successful and carried through to its culmination, is insensitive and will be destructive. I suggest it will be unfair and inequitable and that it will create havoc in the Prairie economy. We need to ensure the survival of a viable agriculture and a viable farm structure in western Canada. We need