

Wheat Acreage Reduction

the quota last year, you would get a quota this year and be a quota-holder. The crux of the matter came in the third year when it was decided that you had to meet a certain production level or you did not qualify, and you did not qualify for anything on the top end either. The limits were set and you had a dairy policy, a nice scheme which produced a certain amount of money in the middle. As the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) pointed out, we are going to curtail that now.

I think there is a similarity in the wheat situation. I think you will find that the \$100 million does not matter a damn. The real thing is going to be, if you do not have summer fallow this year and put some land into forage, when we reallocate the quota system and you start producing wheat again it will no longer be on the present basis, so much for seeded acreage and so much for pasture. You can build up in a number of ways to establish a quota. Those quotas will be gone and the new quotas will be established on a totally new basis which will not take into consideration many of the people who do not play ball with the government. So the money must be incidental, Mr. Speaker. Anyone who has a farm knows that the money really is not sufficient to meet the cost of summer fallow. It will be a unique situation wherein \$6 an acre will supply a years' summer fallow plus cover crop. I do not know what you are going to do with the cover crop; you cannot plant wheat until you get rid of that again.

Mr. Woolliams: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Peters: Certainly.

Mr. Woolliams: I should like to ask the hon. member one simple question. Does he believe they should cut down the acreage, and does he support the regulations of the Wheat Board to keep the price up, particularly in light of the fact that Canada is not adhering to the international wheat agreement?

Mr. Peters: I think this raises the key to the whole problem. I believe the farmers themselves should make a decision before a quota system is applied to them.

Mr. Woolliams: How can they?

Mr. Peters: The hon. member says, "How can they?" In the province of Ontario where we had a very serious problem in the tobacco industry, the industry had a plebiscite and decided that a certain amount of land would

be taken out of production to maintain the price structure. This was agreed by almost everyone in the industry and they have since been able to regulate. Sometimes they increase the quota to more than the year before, but they have been able to maintain a balance between production and the market. The hon. member asked whether the Wheat Board should set its price. I believe the Wheat Board has to set the price, but I think it has to take into consideration a number of factors.

Mr. Woolliams: What are they?

Mr. Peters: Canada is one of the few countries that does not have a government selling agency, and I think it is about time the country made a decision about this. I am not one of those who wholly supports the Wheat Board. I am not in total agreement with the Wheat Board because it is not a sales agency and I believe it should be.

● (1:20 a.m.)

A few minutes ago the hon. member from Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) was very concerned about the longshorem. The longshorem do not make one-thousandth of one per cent of the wheat they handle, but that is not true of the independent brokers who handle wheat that comes in and goes out and make the same money no matter whether they handle wheat from the United States or Canada. As well, they handle cheese and all other foods on a percentage basis; they do not care what they handle. They are not really interested in selling wheat. I think the hon. member for Calgary North will agree that you must have an aggressive sales program.

In my opinion the government, through the Canadian Wheat Board, should be the selling agent. We should be out selling. If, as the hon. member for Bruce suggested, I wanted to sell cattle to Cuba, I should have the support of the government. It would work out long-term arrangements under which export credits would be made available and the cattle would be sold. Surely the government could do something similar with wheat.

In my opinion the Liberal government has been pretty stupid; certainly it has done some pretty stupid things in sales. I remember a minister of a former government saying to his trade commissioners, "Get out and sell, or get out." They sold and worked out a deal with Czechoslovakia to make wheat available on a credit basis. We also worked out arrangements with other countries and they bought wheat on a credit basis.