

*Wheat Acreage Reduction*

folio (Mr. Lang). While that statement does not contain all the detail, it does address itself to all the broad concepts involved. Indeed, it goes into some detail as far as certain aspects are concerned.

I would also recommend another excellent statement which was made on Friday, and that is the one which I myself made to the press. Afterwards, as some hon. members may know, the Minister without Portfolio and I held a press conference in Ottawa. We held another later that day in Winnipeg. By the way, it was broadcast live over the CBC network for 30 or 40 minutes and was rebroadcast on "Country Calendar" on Sunday afternoon. We held a shorter press conference in Saskatoon later that day, and there was yet another in Edmonton on Friday evening. So we have attempted to give this matter as wide a coverage as possible. Nevertheless, I recognize that it is not yet possible for the farmers or for the correspondents to anticipate all the information they might need before making decisions.

In the last few days, and even in the past few weeks, we have been trying to anticipate all the situations which might arise in respect of individual farmers within the broad framework of the program; we have been trying to draw up regulations which would maintain fairness and justice, taking into account the very wide variety of circumstances which could apply to individual farmers.

The hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh) mentioned two extreme situations, including the case of the man who had 100 per cent summer fallow last year. It seems to me that some consideration must be given to a case of this kind, not only in order that such a farmer can participate in the program but in recognition of the fact that he helped the situation last year. The Minister without Portfolio was asked many questions, including some along the lines of those posed by the hon. member, and he was able to answer them. We shall be mailing to all farmers a copy of the Farm Letter within a few days. It will deal with this program so there may be an understanding of its concepts by all who receive it, whether they are within the designated area or not.

● (9:50 p.m.)

In addition, we are preparing a publication, which I understand is nearly complete, that will be sent to the Canadian Wheat Board permit holders and which will spell out even

[Mr. Olson.]

more detail. It will use some examples of what will be the situation both with respect to the incentives part of the program and also that part of the program relating to the quota for the coming year. I am sure there will be more press conferences as the administrative details become better understood by farm writers and some of the farm leaders. We expect there will be need for a further issue of a Farm Letter later on, perhaps in early April, setting out the administrative structure that we intend to use. What is of immediate importance is that the farmers know the options open to them and that they apply those options to their farming operations in order to decide to what extent they participate in the program.

I think the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Muir) and other hon. members made reference to the figures that we have been using. The Minister without Portfolio mentioned that the sooner there is greater participation, the sooner we will be able to reduce the inventory. The \$140 million that some hon. members talked of is the maximum amount and relates to all of the acres down with spring wheat last year, at \$6 an acre, plus the two million acres more which will be seeded to grass. That is a simple calculation and adds up to \$140 million.

**Mr. Skoberg:** You said it was 20 million plus two million.

**Mr. Olson:** No, I said "of" two. In any event, we have estimated that the program will probably cost around \$100 million inasmuch as this is the percentage of participation that we can realistically expect.

**Mr. Baldwin:** That is probably all that Benson will give you.

**Mr. Olson:** If you have a program covering all of the acreage, you have to be prepared for the maximum number. If applications come in for the 22 million acres, plus the additional \$4 for two million of those 22 million acres, we will have to be prepared to pay out \$140 million. However, I do not expect we will have that percentage of participation, for the reasons I have mentioned.

If for some reason a farmer has no grain on hand, it is no secret that the amounts being offered here will not be sufficient inducement to him not to grow any grain. That is pretty obvious. But I think opposition members lose sight of the fact that this program is designed somehow to rationalize our wheat inventory