

Supplementary Estimates

income comes from livestock and to whom grain is secondary, as well as the mixed farmer. It also takes in the oil seed crop grower. Now, along come a bunch of brainstormers who think all these farmers can be fitted into a single pattern, a single plan.

The Minister without Portfolio from Saskatoon-Humboldt has a copy of the letter I have in my hand, so I will not quote from it. This letter is from a constituent of mine, in which he asks how does he fit into this program with his 400 odd acres of land. He points out that he adjusted his cropping practices last year and most of his land is in summerfallow. He asks should he keep it in summerfallow again, and how can he protect his quota. This is the major problem connected with the program. Here is a program which is supposed to help the income situation in Saskatchewan, but which will make the income situation of many farmers much worse. We were told that this program would prevent expansion into other crops. Time will tell. Forecasts are now being made with respect to the amount of land being turned over to other crops, and left in summerfallow. I think that at this point all bets are off. Nobody knows what is going to happen.

• (4:50 p.m.)

Nothing is said here about a marketing program, about a program to move more of our products into the markets of the world. The government just says, "We are going to take 22 million acres out of production," despite the fact the minister himself has publicly stated that 20 million acres would be a desirable and manageable wheat acreage for the western plains. Mr. Claude Hudson, an unquestioned authority for the wheat industry in Canada has produced a study commissioned by the Economic Council of Canada in which he says we are going to need 25 million acres in wheat by 1975. Last year we only had 24.5 million acres sown to wheat and almost anyone would have to concede that this would have been cut this year to around 20 million acres. Now, the government pushes the panic button and disrupts the total economics of agriculture in western Canada, leaving the individual farmer to work himself out of the box he has been put in by the government.

Should we be unfortunate enough to experience a couple of dry years, on top of the economic dislocation inherent in this plan, we could have serious soil erosion as well. This program is proposed as a solution to an

area already in the down-turn economically and asks the farmers to restrict production, not even, to use the basic resource already there. As far as economics is concerned, it is a weirdo. If agriculture were marginal to the area, it could be treated as a marginal industry not having top priority. But it is not marginal, it is the main industry and the economy of the region depends on the wealth generated by it. You cannot put it into mothballs because if you do the farmers and a lot of business go into mothballs with it.

Here we have this program purporting to put \$100 million-odd dollars into the hands of farmers but nobody knows how much of it will actually get there. If it does get there the farmer will probably spend most of it trying to conform with the non-productive program which the government has dreamed up. The only advice I can give to the minister and those around him is to adjust the program before it is too late. Try to recapture some of the confidence of the farmers, try to get them to work along with you to achieve some possible objective. Try for a program which will improve the condition of the farmer and not add to his difficulties.

[Translation]

Mr. Oza Tétrault (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on the supplementary estimates introduced today by the minister and which have no bearing on any votes regarding grants to gold mines.

Mr. Speaker, if I may, I should like to say a few words about the situation of the mining towns in northwestern Quebec, in particular Val-D'Or, Malartic, Cadillac, Chapais, Rouyn-Noranda and Chibougamau. These seven municipalities exist today mainly because of mining operations, which provide employment to 2,000 workers. They were established around the 30's. Millions of dollars were spent to provide the citizens with adequate public services and to make of these communities well-organized municipalities.

If the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) has not yet visited Abitibi, I am pleased to invite him to do so and I hope that he will come during the 70's. Several ministers of this government have already paid a short visit to Abitibi. They were surprised to find that our municipalities were modern and equipped with the same facilities as large urban centres in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, lately I received seven resolutions from city councils and school boards of my area asking the government to continue