

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: I do not want to go into that. If the honourable senator would like me to give a complete answer to that I would have to find how much wheat is in the elevators at the head of the lakes, at Quebec and Montreal, and in the country elevators in the Prairie provinces, and also obtain an estimate of what is in the granaries on the farms. I would not want to do that now.

Hon. Mr. Hnatyshyn: If the honourable Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Aseltine) will permit an interjection: The surplus had been reduced since the year 1957 from 700 million bushels to 500 million bushels, prior to this year's crop.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: I know the carryover of the wheat on my farms is getting less all the time.

Hon. Mr. Bruni: Don't give away the family secrets.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: We are not suffering from want of storage space. I will procure the information requested by the honourable senator from Northumberland-Miramichi (Hon. Mr. Burchill).

My experience in the past has been that these surpluses tend to disappear. We are diversifying our farming more than we did. We are growing durum wheat, flax, rapeseed and that kind of thing, with the result that the surplus of wheat we store on the farm has been gradually decreasing.

Hon. Mr. Lambert: May I ask my honourable friend just a short question, which I am sure he will be able to answer readily because of his familiarity with the subject. The Prairie Grain Loans Act was passed in the early stages of last session to provide short-term credit to farmers. In view of the bountiful crop that was finally harvested, can my honourable friend indicate how much of that relief was used in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: I know that the crop was pretty well all harvested in the spring. There was some loss, 25 or 30 per cent loss. In the spring it was picked up out of the swath where most of it was lying unthreshed. I cannot tell you how much money was loaned to farmers in connection with the legislation we passed earlier this year.

Some of our farmers find themselves in a difficult situation. Most of the wheat that is shipped for export is grown in Saskatchewan, some in Alberta, some in Manitoba—but not so much in Manitoba, as that province is gradually becoming one of the biggest mixed farming provinces in Canada. There they now grow great quantities of grain for feed which they use locally in raising livestock. In Saskatchewan we are obliged to market our wheat under the quota system. That was

fully explained when we were talking about these matters a few years ago. Every farmer who has a quota book is allowed to deliver 300 bushels of wheat at the beginning of the crop year as soon as he harvests his crop. Then, as space in the elevators can be arranged, he is allowed a one-bushel quota on his specified acreage; and, later on, he is allowed another bushel, and so on, until last year most of the farmers were able to market on a seven-bushel or eight-bushel quota. I do not want to go into the question of what a specified acre is, but, roughly, it is the total acreage of the farm that is in that kind of grain. If a farmer had 200 acres in wheat and 200 acres in summer fallow he would be allowed a seven-bushel quota on 400 acres, and so on. I think that is quite clear.

The trouble the farmers are finding right now is due to this, that when we obtained the order for 30 million bushels of durum wheat from Italy, which was a wonderful sale, the Wheat Board threw open all the elevators and gathered in all the durum wheat that was grown in the country in previous years and this year to fill those Italian orders. The result was that when I left home to come to Ottawa all the elevators were filled and most of the farmers had only been able to get in their 300-bushel unit of hard spring wheat. In some places where there is a one- or two-bushel quota the elevators are filled, and farmers are unable to market any grain. Therefore, they are finding difficulty in taking care of their current expenses.

Then the strike on the west coast, which has not been settled yet, the strike at Montreal, and such things, have tended to bottle up the movement of grain from western Canada and have created quite a lot of hardship. We are hoping that these things will clear up. As I stated before, it is the farmers in Saskatchewan and Alberta who suffer most.

Further, despite the fact that farms have been increasing in size and we now have some 160,000 fewer farms than we had 25 years ago, owing to mechanization, advances in technology, and that kind of thing, production has kept pace. It has even increased in many cases, and will continue to do so. Therefore, it seems to me that we cannot very well keep on growing wheat from year to year and piling it up in a surplus, but will have to work out a scheme of diversification.

Honourable senators, agriculture is still an important part of our economy. In 1959 it contributed 1.7 billions to the Canadian gross national product, and its share in the Canadian export market was 19 per cent, or