

Inquiries of the Ministry

resulted in no benefit as far as the reduction of prices is concerned, and since the commission has now been turned into purely a public relations body that is turning out misleading stuff of this kind, whether it is not now time to consider either abolishing the commission or firing its chairman?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member's supplementary is purely argumentative.

GRAIN**WHEAT—ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAM—
FUTURE PLANS**

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the hon. member for Saskatoon-Humboldt, the Minister without Portfolio. A number of the letters I have received in connection with the so-called LIFT program, sometimes called the WARP program, indicate that the major weakness is that it is not tied to a long-term program. Farmers are asking what plans the minister or the government has if the farmers proceed to reduce their acreage as requested. What plans in general, not in particular, does the government have for the year 1971-72? The farmers need that information in order to determine the course they will follow in 1970.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. gentleman is asking for a rather general statement of policy. Perhaps the minister might reply in a brief way.

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, the only way I can reply briefly is by saying that the approach to this question has been made clear by the Minister of Agriculture and myself on previous occasions. It would require a statement on motions to repeat it at this time.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I have read the statement and I, in common with the farmers in general, cannot understand what the government stands for. That is the reason I asked. If the minister does not know I will not press him.

**WHEAT—ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAM—
REFERENDUM OF PERMITHOLDERS**

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister without Portfolio. In view of reports that many farmers on the prairies do not find the government's proposals under operation LIFT acceptable, and in view of the fact that the National Farmers' Union has

[Mr. Lewis.]

called for the government to rescind this program, will the minister give consideration to holding a referendum of the 190,000 permit-holders on whether or not they are in favour of the wheat acreage reduction program?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): Mr. Speaker, among the 190,000 permit-holders there are, of course, many who could find a change which would be suitable to themselves. It would scarcely be possible to hold a meaningful referendum in connection with a program of this nature.

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the United States government holds referendums in respect of its wheat programs, can the minister inform the House whether any opinion polls have been taken to test the farmers' reactions to the program and whether it is acceptable and, if he has done so, will he report the results to the House?

Mr. Lang: To the greatest degree, Mr. Speaker, the testing of the opinions of producers has come about by contact with farm organizations and farmers themselves. I may say that when it is understood by the producers that this plan is part of a total examination of where the agricultural industry stands and what must be done to put it into its proper state, there is general support and agreement for this approach.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**WHEAT—ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAM—
INCREASE IN ACREAGE PAYMENT**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, in view of reports from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and other agencies as to the intention of farmers to reduce their wheat acreage to 18 million and then to 15 million after operation LIFT was announced, and if the government insists on proceeding with the program and wants it to succeed, will the Minister without Portfolio say whether the government is considering increasing the amount of the acreage payment?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio): No, Mr. Speaker. I must say I have not seen any very accurate analysis of what is likely to happen in regard to planting intentions. It really will be impossible to know exactly how much farmers have changed their plans until in fact seeding is completed.