

Wheat Acreage Reduction

Speaker, and having, hopefully, offered some constructive suggestions for improvements in the plan, I now join the minister in urging farmers to go all out to comply with and take advantage of this imaginative program.

I want also to express my appreciation for the fact that the government has recognized the seriousness of the problems surrounding the grain industry. This plan will, in a very tangible way, reassure farmers in the west that they are not forgotten people. To the extent that farmers are able to share in the estimate of \$100 million, the Prairie economy will benefit from a much needed injection of cash. It should be remembered that delivery opportunities in total will be at least as high in 1970-71 as they are in 1969-70. Therefore, all or any part of this \$100 million which finds its way into farmers' hands will represent a net improvement in the cash income position. As I said earlier, I am even hopeful that at least a few farmers will openly express appreciation of the plan. In fact, some of them already have expressed appreciation to me. But it is not easy for a western farmer to praise the federal government.

If I may take the liberty of concluding on a political note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out again that this program is a very commendable one. The people who benefit from it, and they are very numerous, should be made aware that only the hard work of the Prairie cabinet ministers made this plan possible. At a time when the watchword in Ottawa is "Hold the line," they were able to persuade their colleagues and the Prime Minister to allocate \$100 million to this plan.

Without some Prairie Liberal backbenchers to press for cash assistance to grain producers, without some Prairie Liberal cabinet members and without, especially, a cabinet member from Saskatchewan—which we did not have from 1963 to 1968—I do not think we would have had this program.

An hon. Member: You would not have needed it.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): Many of the other ministers have been interested enough in western Canada to pay repeated visits there to learn more about the situation. Even with all these obvious advantages and improvements, I still do not believe this item would have been given approval if the Prime Minister had not taken time last summer to personally investigate the grain problem. He gained a very sympathetic understanding of

the business of grain farming with all its hazards.

An hon. Member: You are pretty naive.

Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia): So I hope that many other members and many people across the country will join me in acknowledging, with thanks, that the government has made a tremendous first step in tackling the very important and vexing western farm problems.

An hon. Member: Amen!

Mr. Cliff Downey (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I heard the minister in charge of the Wheat Board (Mr. Lang) make his announcement on Friday on these new measures in regard to western farmers. After he had made his announcement I listened to my house leader and the leader of the New Democratic Party deal with them rather harshly, and I thought that maybe they were a little hasty in running down his program. Being a new member here, in my innocence I thought he was trying to do his best for us and I even sent him a note of congratulation. How naive could I be? Like so many other proposals of this government, it was only a political exercise, though I did not realize it then.

Over the weekend I had time to see how I could fit his proposals into my own program, because I am still an active farmer, and I could come up with very little. In fact, in my situation it turns out that I will have to go out and tear up 500 or 600 acres of grass so that I have enough quota to pay my cash advance.

Mr. Lang: There is no quota on that.

Mr. Downey: In the few minutes at my disposal, Mr. Speaker, I shall try to point out some of the weaknesses which I see in these measures. I should like to take the example of a man with 1,000 cultivated acres, on which he has quota now. Suppose he has co-operated with the government and attempted to diversify in the last few years, and in so doing he has about 400 acres seeded to grass: listening to the government encouraging him to summer fallow, he has his cropping on a basis of half summer fallow and half crop, so he ends up with the 400 acres under grass, 300 summer fallow and 300 in cash crops.

Under the proposed quota system he gets 25 per cent of his summer fallow from last year included with his new quota for 1971, and this is 75 acres. He is allowed to quota on the 300 acres summer fallow which he has this