

*Wheat Acreage Reduction*

in the evening to suggest that the hero of the piece in connection with the policy announced by the government was the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I think tonight we had a far more realistic exhibition of the interest of the Prime Minister in this particular question, when, after my colleague the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave) had commenced to speak, the Prime Minister entered the House and indicated that he wished to make an announcement. I think no member of the opposition had any objection to this as such. The Prime Minister on occasion has very important matters to announce. If it was indeed a very important matter that required consideration at that moment, no one would stand in his way. However, we had an announcement which I think was not so urgent that it could not have at least awaited the completion of the speech of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar.

Subsequently, as soon as the Prime Minister had made his statement and after exchanging a couple of comments privately with colleagues on that side of the House, he left the House prior to the completion of the address of the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar. I think this gave a very real and accurate indication of the degree of interest in this problem by the Prime Minister.

I think when we are discussing the issues before us this evening we should keep in mind those about whom we are talking. We are talking about the farmer and his family; we are talking about his community; we are talking about the food-producing industry and about all other segments of the economy which are related to agriculture. We had a policy announcement last Friday which I consider to be the culmination and climax of a long series of events involving mismanagement, bungling and policy errors. Now the farmer has to pay the shot. He is left with little in the way of real alternatives in the present situation, on the basis of the announcement made last Friday. He is locked-in on the basis of the quota system as it is now being developed. He is almost being forced to take land out of production.

The minister and government officials have stated that the income of the farmer will not be changed because he will just be selling the inventory that he already has on hand. I hope the people of Canada and government members realize that what the farmer will be selling during the coming year from his inventory is what he will have to live off, secure his income from and pay the greater

[Mr. Burton.]

portion of his expenses out of for 1970-71, and that this is some of the income which helped to build paper-income figures over the past several years but was not cash income in the pocket of the farmer.

We have had, of course, a very important policy announcement by the government which will affect every person in western Canada. I presume a good deal of study went into this policy before it was finally decided upon. I understand that there were a number of studies carried out leading up to the conclusions and decisions of the government. I appeal to the minister in charge of the Wheat Board, who has been involved in this matter, to table some of the relevant studies on this matter in order to provide fuller information on the subject and which would contribute materially, I suggest, to a more informed discussion of the issues before us at the present time.

Of course, we have considerable background on this situation which I do not intend to go into in detail at this hour of the night. Several years ago we had the statement of the Minister of Trade and Commerce at that time: You grow the wheat and we will sell it. Later on we had the development of the switch-over from the International Wheat Agreement to the International Grains Arrangement, which left very serious deficiencies in terms of the over-all international marketing situation. Then we had an 11-month period between the expiration of the old International Wheat Agreement and the commencement of the new International Grains Arrangement. This, of course, produced a very serious situation for the western farmer and witnessed the commencement of the disappointing slide in the international wheat marketing situation.

• (11:30 p.m.)

We had price drops at that time. Later, in March of 1969, there was a policy decision to drop prices below the International Grains Arrangement minimum. We have as yet had no indication from the government that there will be any price guarantees in terms of the final payment for the 1968-69 crop, for the present crop year 1969-70 or the next crop year 1970-71.

Several members have made reference to the prospect of a new grading system being introduced, which has been referred to for many years. I first heard the chief chemist of the Board of Grain Commissioners outline this new system of protein grading over 20