

Wheat Acreage Reduction

summer fallow if a farmer abandoned part or all of his farm, did no cultivation and allowed the weeds to take over.

The only thing wrong with such a suggestion is that few farmers could bring themselves to commit such sacrilege. I would fear for the sanity of the farmer who did it, because if he was not crazy already he would probably go nuts looking at the desecration of his farm. You might just as well ask the gardeners and groundkeepers on Parliament Hill to let the flower beds become overgrown with weeds and the lawns go uncut because of an oversupply of hay in the Ottawa Valley.

Because I do not believe it is right to criticize without making some constructive suggestions, Mr. Speaker, I now propose a few improvements to what is basically a very good program as follows:

1. Treat all increases in forage crop acreage in 1969 more equitably by allowing wheat quota on 50 per cent of that increase.

2. Give full credit on the 1970-71 wheat quota for any increase in summer fallow which took place between 1968 and 1969, even if it means the elimination of the flat 25 per cent credit in the program for all 1969 summer fallow.

3. This might very well permit an increase of one or two bushels in the guaranteed wheat quota level for 1970-71, that is, from eight bushels to nine bushels or ten bushels.

4. Increase the acreage payment from \$6 and \$10 to \$9 and \$15 in order to inject the full \$100 million into the Prairie economy and in order to achieve a conversion in the area of 10 million acres.

5. Be prepared to continue this program for 1971-72, or another program which might be an improvement on this one in light of this year's experience.

6. If the ministers are really serious about preventing a glut in coarse grains and oilseeds, they should introduce a regulation which would penalize farmers for increasing those acreages. I would hesitate to recommend such a step, but I feel that there is bound to be an increase in coarse grains and oilseed crops in the absence of such restrictions. Farmers will in large number decide individually that they will reduce their wheat acreage, but instead of re-summer fallowing they will seed a variety of crops for which there might be a market.

• (10:30 p.m.)

The history of agriculture teaches us that markets for farm products are unpredictable,

[Mr. Douglas (Assiniboia).]

by farmers at least. Farmers are, in the very nature of the business, the greatest gamblers in the nation. So they will take a chance that at least some of these alternative crops will find a market.

When our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was in the Prairies last July he talked face to face with many farmers right on the farms and in the farmhouses, and after hearing about the many hazards grain producers face he made a remarkable statement. He heard that farmers have to make hard choices each year as to what and how much to seed in the spring, and take chances in this regard. Then we have to contend with the weather through the growing season, the risks of hail, frost, drought and flood. Some of these risks continue through the harvest. If we finally harvest some grain, and we have been relatively successful in the aggregate in the last few years—this is part of the problem—after we have it harvested we have to gamble on how much we will sell and what price we will get for it. After hearing all this, Prime Minister Trudeau said, "It appears to me that it would be easier to run the government than to operate a grain farm."

It was gratifying to hear the minister in charge of the Wheat Board say in his statements last Friday that the government regarded this as only an interim measure; long-term policy is being developed. The long awaited report of the Task Force on Agriculture will soon be tabled, I hope. I urge the government to lose no more time in developing a long-term comprehensive farm policy for Canada. It is worthy of note, too, that the ministers have been actively negotiating with at least some of the other major wheat exporters. The United States has had a much more generous wheat acreage reduction program for many years and has progressively reduced its wheat acreage to the lowest level in a great many years.

The minister stated that the Wheat Board and the government will give the fullest possible attention to promoting wheat sales and sales of other Canadian field crops. I agree with the hon. member for Bruce (Mr. Whicher) that this is the best solution for our surplus problem. In a hungry world we must do everything possible to distribute the over abundance we have to the people who need it. So I say, let us revise our selling techniques, let us revise our grading system to diversify our Prairie agriculture gradually and continuously until we get away from this risky, one-crop economy. Having said all that, Mr.