

Supplementary Estimates

received letters from them has a better appreciation of the situation than the minister. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics issued a preliminary report of the farmers' intentions with regard to seeding wheat. On the basis of information prior to March 1, indications were that even without the minister's announcement they intended to reduce their wheat production by 25 per cent, from a level of 24½ million acres last year to just over 18 million acres this year. The summerfallow acreage was to increase by roughly 1½ million acres.

If this is the type of advice the minister is receiving, then either the minister or his advisers should vacate their positions. It is impossible to see how there will be any increase. As I have already said, the farmers need this income. Not only do they need it, but many of them do not have surpluses. Over the years many of them have had to diversify. Many of them took advantage of the community pastures program because they did not have their own pasturage. Many of them have gone to work part-time in an attempt to maintain their family farm. They have tried to expand their farms. Many young farmers thought there was hope. This seems to be the only policy the minister intends to announce. He has not indicated how these people can earn money with which to pay their taxes. The attitude is that if they survive another year, maybe another quota system or some other arrangement can be worked out. The minister leaves these people waiting and wondering.

The minister has indicated that an appeal board will deal with some of the difficult situations which are not covered by regulations or the policy announced. He has indicated that this appeal board is necessary. Even if the membership of the board had been announced immediately, he knows how slow some of these appeal boards are. The time for spring seeding is fast approaching and some appeals may not be heard before that time. Obviously there is no intention to hear appeals from some of these people. Regulations have not been prepared. At this stage everyone is left scrambling for himself and running in every direction, thanks to the minister. If it were a dollar item it would be closer to the amount that actually will be spent, not \$100 million. A false impression has been left in this regard.

Everybody in the east thinks we are getting \$100 million. On the basis of a 1.5 million acres increase in summerfallow, times \$6, only about \$10 million is involved. Another couple

of million acres might qualify. If the total reaches \$30 million you will be stretching it a long way. If there is to be a partial payment in July, the minister will by then have an idea who qualifies and who does not.

• (8:40 p.m.)

The economic squeeze is so hard now that the minister should immediately allocate \$70 million, using whatever plan he wishes as a basis, in order that some of those people who will not be given a quota may be able to meet their bank payments and keep their families together. I do not care whether he uses the method of acreage payments or follows some other scheme. I wish he would have compassion for these people who have not been allotted quotas for several years and who will be denied an income this year because of the minister's action.

I do not know what it takes to move a heartless minister. I have said that an appeal board is necessary. Some of the questions I have asked in the House illustrate the need for an appeal board and for the prompt publication of regulations. What about the case of the farmer whose land was broken up last year? How will he be affected by the quota system? What about the man who was hailed out last year and put his land in summerfallow the year before? He will be bound to put in a crop this year, but he will not have the benefit of a quota. What is the situation of all those whose land was fallow last year, who paid their taxes but who have no hope of an income this year?

Like other hon. members, I have received a number of letters on this subject and some of them are most interesting. One of them comes from Avonlea, Saskatchewan. The writer says:

The program for summerfallowing and seeding to grass as the basis for next year's delivery quota can only favour one class of farmer—those who have been the prime contributors to the surplus. Those who seed most of their cultivated acreage, using heavy applications of fertilizer are the prime contributors to the huge surplus. I understand that they are now to be blessed with the opportunity of having the lion's share of the market if they will summerfallow for one year.

Most producers in our immediate area have been following a one half crop-one half summerfallow operation.

Later, he says:

I have endeavoured to reach an economical unit whereby my equipment can handle seeding, summerfallowing and harvest. It is inadequate to provide for summerfallowing all my land at the proper time in any one year or to harvest a crop from all my land in the following year.