

Wheat Acreage Reduction

reduction. It was interesting to note that the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States lauded the program.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Why not?

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): My hon. friend asks, why not? In answer to a question I asked this afternoon, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) said that the United States was also reducing its acreage. Over the years they have been doing this on a small percentage basis. The fact remains they are still going to grow 45 million acres of wheat. Their gradual reduction seems to make more sense than this crash program which will leave the farmer without any wheat to grow or any crop to change to, because the minister has already intimated that the surplus of other grains is high enough.

Canada is in the position of making a unilateral reduction in a very large acreage of wheat. I am sure this will bring pressure on other governments from the farmers and producers of their countries to maintain production, if not to increase it, because Canada has told the world it is not going to worry about supplying wheat in the export market. We are not going to grow any wheat this year, therefore the other producers are bound to step into what might be called the vacuum.

The minister now says he is going to discuss acreage reduction with other governments. He has evidently forgotten the old adage about locking the barn door after the horse has been stolen. He has given away all his bargaining powers as far as wheat acreage reduction is concerned. He has left it up to our competitors as to whether they will reduce their wheat acreage. My guess is that if they do reduce their wheat acreage, which is doubtful, it will be only a very small amount.

Had the minister made this suggestion last year when opposition members were pressing for payments on a crop reduction basis, any action taken would not have been nearly so drastic. It would have afforded the farmers more room to manoeuvre in crop selection. It would also have benefited those farmers who voluntarily reduced their wheat acreage by five million acres, many of whom will receive little compensation from the scheme this year.

Actually, the minister's statement shows a defeatist attitude on the part of this government which has failed to maintain Canada's share of the export market. It is a cover-up by the government for its failure to do the

[Mr. Muir (Lisgar).]

things necessary to keep our grain economy competitive in world trade. It is a grandiose scheme which will fall far short of its objective to relieve the desperate cash position of the Prairie farmer. The minister knows as well as I that his boast of a \$140 million payment is just so much window-dressing simply because it is predicated on the fact that no wheat will be grown on the Prairies this year. The Minister of Agriculture smiles at me. He knows very well there will be wheat grown on the Prairies this year. Many thousands of acres of wheat will be grown in spite of this program. What other crops are the farmers going to turn to? What use will be made of the five million acreage reduction that took place last year and was presumably left fallow? Should the farmer turn to rapeseed? I will now deal with the rapeseed situation. Dr. A. M. Runciman, president of the Rapeseed Association of Canada said:

—that the world projection for the production of rapeseed is forecast to be 23 per cent higher than in 1969. This figure, he said, presumes only a slight increase on the part of Canadian farmers.

Traders, however, are expecting a 50 per cent acreage increase, Mr. Runciman said. Seed sales are up 30 per cent to 40 per cent and much of this seed is going into areas that never grew rapeseed before—areas in traditional wheat growing countries. Established growers will use their own seed and this has led the traders to forecast the 50 per cent increase.

Indications are, he said, that we had better get geared to moving the largest crop ever moved and at relatively low prices.

I am reading from the February 26 edition of the *Manitoba Co-operator*. This same paper has an article on flax. This article deals with a suggestion by Dr. W. J. Craddock, associate professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Manitoba. It states:

While no estimates of carryover for the end of 1970-71 crop year could be made at this time, he said it should be noted that if 3,500,000 acres of flax were grown in 1970 even at an average yield of 11.5 bushels per acre, the total supply would be 50,500,000 bushels. If 25,400,000 bushels were, in fact, exported, 25,100,000 bushels would be available for domestic use or carryover...

...the maximum annual domestic use was 8,800,000 bushels and that was in 1956-57. In recent years this figure has been in the range of 4,000,000 to 6,000,000 bushels.

That shows the situation as far as flax is concerned. Should the farmer turn to oats and barley? I do not think I even have to read any comments on that except to prove the point I am making. In the Wheat Board's 1968 supplementary report, the latest available, it is shown that oats and barley produc-