

Grain—Deficiency Payments

I hope that an announcement will be made forthwith in keeping with the requests of farm organizations, an announcement that will satisfy them, that will improve the economic position of the producers and will be in keeping with what the same producers believe has been the promise made to them by this government.

The Prime Minister made a speech in Moose Jaw during the election campaign. At that time the whole question of deficiency payments was raised and at that time he made the statement that this would be given very sympathetic consideration. The Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources went even farther at Wolseley. He is reported in the Regina *Leader-Post* of March 21, 1958, as follows:

He said it was the first step in a comprehensive farm program started by the Progressive Conservatives on June 10. Future steps included a revolutionary farm credit program, crop insurance, tax reductions, deficiency payments on western grains and many other important reforms.

Here is the statement attributed to the minister, that this government would take future steps so important that he called them revolutionary, which would include deficiency payments on western grain. The time for a statement from the government has arrived. The people on the prairies are looking to the government for action. They are most distressed because of the very low final payment announced a few weeks ago. They have been given hope and encouragement by statements of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources and the Prime Minister himself. They feel that their request is reasonable. They are not asking for the same price-cost relationship they had immediately after the war; but they are asking that deficiency payments be of such an order as to restore the price of grains to the 1947-55 average.

I feel, Mr. Speaker, that members generally support this proposition. All we need now is a statement from the government that such action will be forthcoming during the current session.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, I should like to speak for a moment in this debate merely to answer some of the points brought up by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue), much to my dislike, I might say. I agree with certain things he said but I disagree with him with respect to others. He referred to western Canada and how some people in the west were sorry that they had sent too many members to parliament belonging to one party. I can say that the farmers I know in the west are in the

best position they have been for years because of that very fact. At last they have got together and have realized that the only way they can get what is just, what is fair, what is coming to the west is to send a united body of members belonging to one party to parliament rather than splitting their votes between three or four or five or six small splinter parties.

I say again that the west is in the strongest position politically it has ever been and probably will be in the future. As was pointed out, there are 48 members from the prairie provinces and only one who does not support the government party. In view of the fact that a mass delegation is thinking about coming to Ottawa may I say that we have a mass delegation here already. There are 47 members from the prairie provinces who support the government. That is a mass delegation, and every one of those 47 members has been working for deficiency payments and for what he thinks is right for western Canada.

Let there be no doubt in the minds of the members of that small group to your left, Mr. Speaker, or any other group in the House of Commons that they have been working for it because they have been doing so on numerous occasions. The government certainly has the matter under study and it has been under study a great deal. It is a question that needs a great deal of study.

I am a farmer from the west and I am proud of it but before we implement deficiency payments as the solution for everything we must give the matter a little thought. Over a long term period I think a better system of farm loans could do more for agriculture than a straight, flat gift every year which from a political point of view would have to be increased every year.

The hon. member mentioned the Prairie Farm Assistance Act and said that he thought the acreage should be raised. He stated that his reason for suggesting that the acreage should be raised was that farms are getting larger. I have not had time to look it up in *Hansard* but I would refer the hon. member to the statement of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Harkness) last October in which he indicated that there are 230,000 permit holders in western Canada, half of them with less than 200 acres of cultivated acreage. Why would you increase the acreage to 600 acres? It would be of greater benefit to the larger farmers and would not benefit the small permit holders to the same extent. That is something we have got to watch. With an improved farm loan board administered on a better basis we could do a lot more. We could lend money on the basis of the farmer's ability to earn, not on his security. If we