

*Wheat Acreage Reduction*

other farmers are being asked to do now. They have cut down the wheat surplus both for the country and themselves, and now because of their reduced wheat acreage and reduced wheat surplus they are unable to take advantage of these incentives.

It is true that they will have partial compensation because they can use 25 per cent of their 1969 summer fallow acreage for wheat quota in 1970-71. But the poor fellow who last year adopted this plan's preferred alternative and increased his grass or legume acreage gets absolutely no credit for it. His first reaction is that he will convert that grass stand, which is not even established yet, back to summer fallow so that he can use it as wheat quota acreage.

I have been informed today that when full details of the plan are available, this option will be found to be ruled out. But he may decide to summer fallow it anyway, to protect his position in 1971-72. I ask the responsible minister now, as I did earlier today and will continue to do so until a change is made, to revise this plan to increase the credit for 1969 summer fallow to perhaps 50 per cent, and more importantly and more insistently, to give a 50 per cent credit for increases in forage crop acreages last year. If these amendments are made, the government will partly confound the dissidents who counsel farmers to refuse to co-operate with government advice.

The third group includes the multitude of mixed farmers who have no burdensome wheat surplus. They have fed a lot of their grain to livestock and have tended to produce only enough wheat to fill their quotas. Under the new plan their quotas will probably not be reduced very much, at least if they have been summer fallowing a third or more of their acreage each year. Therefore, there will be no need and little incentive for them to reduce their wheat acreage.

If they can get some grass seed—and most of them will not be able to do so—they may seize this opportunity to get help to do this and thereby contribute a little to the wheat acreage reduction drive. They will largely tend to ignore this plan, and because they represent the majority of farmers, although probably not the preponderance of wheat acreage, the wheat acreage reduction program will fall far short of its goal.

Taking all these things into account, Mr. Speaker, I doubt whether the program will be nearly as successful as the \$100 million price

tag envisions. The minister must have calculated that 14 million or 15 million acres of wheat will be converted to summer fallow and one million or two million to forage crops, to achieve a pay-out in the neighbourhood of \$100 million. I will be greatly and agreeably surprised if farmers respond with a total conversion of half that much.

A program of wheat acreage reduction incentives should have been instituted a year or more ago. I tried hard to persuade the government to do so. When it became apparent last spring that there would be no such program for 1969, I immediately started to campaign for a 1970 program. In this regard the House might be interested to know that a senior government official telephoned me in Saskatchewan last August to ask my opinion of the effects of two levels of incentive for wheat acreage reduction. Without any research or time for reflection, I offered the estimate that a payment of \$5 per acre would result in a reduction of five million acres and that a payment of \$10 per acre would result in a reduction of ten million acres. So this policy has been under consideration for at least six or seven months.

It is too bad it was not announced two months ago because many farmers, like myself, have got themselves practically locked into a pattern or plan of seeding from which it will be difficult to deviate. They have laid in supplies of fertilizer, bought seed and prepared their equipment. Now they will scramble around and compete with each other for scarce supplies of forage crop seed. Throughout the past several months I have repeatedly advocated that a wheat acreage reduction program should be based on 1968 acreages; that the program should go back to 1968 before the five million-acre cut was voluntarily achieved last year, and reward those farmers who so patriotically reduced their acreage last year. I am disappointed that this program does not go back to 1968, or at least average 1968 and 1969 except in a few exceptional cases.

Back in the dirty thirties a great deal of land was abandoned and reverted to municipal governments. The owners ceased farming. The best farmers survived and eventually increased their holdings by bringing abandoned land back into production in the forties. The land suffered very little; in fact, it became revitalized from lying idle. There is nothing wrong with the suggestion that, in effect, this should happen again in a planned way. I understand that it would be counted as