

Wheat Acreage Reduction

farmers of what this plan means to them, advising them of the circumstances under which they should go into summer fallow, reduce acreage or produce other crops.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): I intend to be very brief, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I should like to say that as far as the Wheat Board is concerned the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) has been charged with a very difficult task. No one in this House would have liked to take the position he has taken. He has inherited a most difficult problem. I think we have all been a little dishonest as far as wheat sales are concerned. The unions, the farm groups have supported the Wheat Board as far as sales are concerned; they believe we have to keep the price up; they have motivated this philosophy. That is what makes it very difficult.

We have a surplus of wheat in Canada. There is what the newspapers call a world surplus. But it is only a world surplus as far as the buyers' market is concerned. As other hon. members have said, two-thirds of the world's population goes to bed hungry. The surplus is only in the buyers' field. Today questions were asked on Orders of the Day and they penetrated to the heart of the wheat problem. I say to the minister: My sympathy is with you, sir.

We are breaking the international wheat agreement. Every country is doing so. Forty-four importing and exporting nations are breaking the agreement. The government is faced with this problem. It is faced with the attitude of the unions of western Canada; it is faced with the attitude of the wheat pools of western Canada. They must put their ears to the ground. They must not get into competitive marketing, selling on the open market.

There is one thing of which I am proud. It was our party which set up the Canadian Wheat Board in 1935. Then, when the world war was declared we were told we had to have a ceiling on the price of wheat. This was when wheat was controlled, as to price, entirely by the Wheat Board—not to keep the price up but to keep it down.

Mr. Burton: Right.

Mr. Woolliams: I hear a member to my left say "Right", and I will have something to say about that party in a few minutes. I will defend any government—and the minister will be happy to hear I defend him—that has tried to handle this problem. I wish the minister success. However, I tell him he must break free from the bureaucracy that exists

[Mr. Benjamin.]

in the Department of Trade and Commerce and in the Wheat Board, because this is a tough problem to tackle.

It was admitted in this House that we broke the international wheat agreement because a state of open trade existed. That is what the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) said. Having made that admission, one crime begets another and the gate was opened wide. Basically, I do not support the program presented by the minister, and for this reason. First of all, if the farms in western Canada turn to summer fallow, you will create a dust bowl. Second, where will you get the grass seed to grow forage crops? I asked that question today.

The only way Canada can get out of the mess it is in is to sell wheat. From being the No. 1 exporting nation of the world, in the last three years we have moved to fourth or fifth place.

An hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woolliams: Someone to the left says, "Hear, hear." Let me say something about my hon. friends. The NDP cannot have it both ways. They have been sitting in this House of Commons and have been economic hypocrites. The hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) talked about the longshoremens, and today they are paid the highest salary of any longshoremens anywhere in the world. As a result, the price of wheat and cost of production have been affected.

Mr. Nystrom: How much do lawyers get?

Mr. Woolliams: Now my hon. friend is getting nasty, but I do not mind. I am not talking about the professions, what Members of Parliament get or what the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said this afternoon. I am talking to the back row farmers of western Canada. It is the backbenchers who are rocking the boat. Those in the front rows are supporting the unions. That party cannot have it both ways.

An increase in the cost of production on the farms means an increase in the price of wheat in international markets throughout the world. As far as I am concerned, to put it bluntly, when you increase labour costs you increase wheat prices on the world market. You cannot have this both ways. If you increase the wages of longshoremens and wages all the way down the line, you increase the cost of delivering grain throughout the world. This is the area in which I come to the defence of the government. You cannot have