

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

would cost them next to nothing. With minimum expenditure the government could give city dwellers the impression that the government was hard at work attempting to solve the farmer's problems and thus avoid incurring a political liability of vast proportions in its main areas of strength.

The plan is tokenism of the worst sort since it attempts to pose as a substantial remedy. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) is fond of saying that it represents a massive injection of capital, \$100 million, into the western economy. It represents nothing of the sort. Noncompliance with the plan will mean that the projected \$100 million expenditure will be reduced to \$55 million at most. Even if the west received the full \$100 million, what does that mean in real terms when the farm income in Saskatchewan alone has declined by \$167 million in the past year?

Two years ago the then Minister of Agriculture told the farmers of western Canada that he would undertake to sell at \$1.95 f.o.b. Lakehead 433½ million bushels of wheat per year over the next three years. For a number of years governments in Canada have been advising the farmers that they need to expand and specialize. These promises may have been sincerely made and the advice sincerely given, but the fact is they were wrong. I think the government of the day has an obligation to attempt to solve the problems that have been created because farmers followed that advice incorrect as it was, and because those promises could not be honoured. The proper way to do this would be to buy the farm-stored grain.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

**Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister without Portfolio):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to have been able to congratulate the hon. member on his effort tonight in view of his status as a new member of this House. I will try to be as gentle as I can with him, bearing in mind what he has said.

I find it surprising that he should continue to say, in effect, "What's \$100 million?"—to suggest that this is not a significant sum and even to infer that the provision of such an amount was somehow helpful to us politically in the cities. In fact it is difficult to explain in parts of the non-rural areas of the country why this program to help farmers was desirable. I am not surprised the hon. member does not understand the program. He has been

talking with his hon. friends who have been doing the general disservice of denying themselves an understanding of the plan and failing to acquaint farmers, in discussions with them, with the real benefits to be obtained from it.

I shall not speculate as to the exact number of acres which may come out of production. Before long we shall know the facts. The truth is that the plan provides an opportunity for farmers with surpluses to avoid producing further crops and to dispose of their surpluses in favour of an improved cash position this year. It allows those without surpluses to calculate the advantage of growing wheat as compared with other crops. Generally, it will direct them to the growing of crops other than wheat this year as a further help in disposing of the wheat surplus.

I should like to emphasize the benefit of the plan to farmers without surpluses who will produce other crops. To the extent that this program is successful, many acres which might have been used to grow crops other than wheat may be kept out of production. This would allow farmers without a surplus to have a better market for barley and rapeseed. The plan does provide for an injection of cash into the Prairie region where it is so badly needed, particularly into those areas where grain has been the main source of income and where cash has been shortest.

In a situation like this, \$100 million can be of significant assistance. Such a sum in the Prairie region has secondary and tertiary effects as it moves through the economy, and this is why I have asked from the beginning that hon. members join in explaining to farmers the advantages they can take from the plan and not spend all their time in petty, partisan carping.

POST OFFICE—POSTAGE RATE INCREASES  
FORECAST BY MINISTER—  
GOVERNMENT POLICY

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, since my question was directed to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) I do not know who will be responding to my comments in this adjournment debate.

**Mr. Kierans:** I'll give you one guess.

**Mr. Macquarrie:** Even before the Montreal crisis brought cabinet minister after cabinet minister into the act, the mismanagement of the Post Office Department had become a matter of concern for the whole government.