

Wheat Acreage Reduction

we going to say to France, Australia or any other country that from now on they can have the market, we will not fight for it?

I suggest to the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister without Portfolio that it is high time they got the protein program on the road. I have been farming for 25 years or so and ever since then there has been talk about an improved grading programs. What has been done about this? Are we abdicating from foreign markets? I suggest to the House that the government is not only interested in solving the problems of the grain farmers; part of its interest at least has been to attempt to forestall any crash or reduction in the red meat market. I cannot criticize the government for this. I do not think it would be reasonable for us to move from one area to another, but I do not think this program is strictly in the interest of the grain farmers.

I wonder if our farmers could be given an option, if they could perhaps grow more Durum wheat, more flax or more rapeseed. I suggest to the minister that the government consider arranging to take off the market next fall a certain amount of each of these grains. Let me illustrate it this way. I recall the time when we thought we had a surplus of Durum wheat. However, it turned out that there was a crop failure in Italy or some other country. The same thing happened last year with rapeseed, so that we could move more rapeseed than we had anticipated. Would it not be better if we had a reasonable surplus of these crops, so we could have more alternatives in case something turned up? I suggest that rather than have a surplus in one kind of grain, we might have a surplus in another.

A number of other hon. members wish to speak this evening. In conclusion, in my view the sales program has not been developed fully. We have lost some of our sales to Britain and to Japan. I believe that the coarse grains market could be expanded. I believe this is one market we could develop successfully. I suggest that both the ministers concerned should look seriously at this aspect of our grain surplus problem, and hopefully we will arrive at some solutions which are not completely negative.

Mr. A. B. Douglas (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this debate because it gives us an opportunity to express opinions about operation LIFT, which is an abbreviation for Lower Inventory for Tomorrow, an imaginative title.

[Mr. Thomson.]

A great many farmers welcome this program and will make good use of it by complying with it in large measure. Other farmers—and those are principally the patriotic, co-operative types who voluntarily reduced their wheat acreage and increased their summer fallow and grass acreage last year—are greatly dismayed at the inequitable treatment given to them. Still others—I am afraid they exist in large enough numbers to prevent the plan from achieving its goal—will decide to continue their present system of farming, unmoved by the carrot of acreage reduction payments or the stick of wheat quota restrictions contained in the plan.

I propose to deal briefly with each of these three different classifications of grain producers. They cannot be identified clearly with any one area of the Prairies, their farm size, or the type of farming, but I will try to make some references to these factors as I proceed.

• (10:20 p.m.)

First, those who will make greatest use of this plan will be large grain farmers and smaller farmers who produce grain almost exclusively. They will be those who have kept their summer fallow and grass acreages at a low level, and their wheat acreages high. They will be found in the more arid parts of the Prairies which are not suited to livestock production, that is, the Palliser triangle. They will be of the group which has accumulated a burdensome surplus of wheat. It must be remembered that there are within that triangle many districts that have had crop failures in the last year or two because of flood, hail, drought and frost. So even here there will be a percentage of farmers who will not be in a position to embrace this program.

Then there is always a fraction who will say, perhaps with some justification, that the only wise and safe course is to act exactly opposite to what the government recommends. Still, a large number of this group of farmers will co-operate with this new program. Perhaps even a few of them will give the government a little praise for its good intentions, its initiative and the double-barreled reward.

The second group includes all those farmers who were naïve enough and perhaps foolish enough to follow government advice last year. They cut down their wheat acreage, in some cases to nil, increased their summer fallow and cultivated forage acreage. In other words, they have already done voluntarily what