

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

GRAIN—WHEAT—SUGGESTED WITHDRAWAL OR ALTERATION OF ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAM

Mr. Doug. Rowland (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, last Tuesday I asked two questions of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson), the substantial portions of which he declined to answer on the grounds that he did not agree with the premise upon which the questions were based, those premises being that operation LIFT was a failure and that it will be of virtually no assistance to those farmers whom I have the honour to represent and to farmers in like circumstances throughout the rest of Canada.

It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has spent a good deal of time lately on the Prairies talking to farmers. I should like to say at this time that if he still believes operation LIFT will succeed in reducing the acreage sown to wheat in western Canada by two-thirds, he has been doing a great deal more talking than listening.

During my campaign I must have visited between 20 and 25 per cent of the farm families in my riding. Not one of those farmers thought he would benefit from operation LIFT, and very few I talked to felt they would be in a position to comply with the provisions of the plan. Indeed, if I may be blunt, the greatest liability the Liberal candidate had in my campaign, next to the Prime Minister himself, was operation LIFT. Journalists have spent considerable time in the last few weeks commenting on operation LIFT and interviewing farmers to find out what they have done. They have all reached the conclusion that Mr. Newman reached in today's *Globe and Mail*, that farmers are rejecting the plan and will not co-operate with its provisions.

● (10:00 p.m.)

I mention also at this point, with respect to the premise upon which I based my question, that last month there were demonstrations in Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg which involved over 12,000 farmers. At each of these three demonstrations the 12,000 farmers denounced operation LIFT and demanded its

[Mr. Burton.]

abandonment by the government. If in the face of this kind of evidence and these events the minister still says that the plan is going to be a success, I hate to think of the kind of evidence the minister requires before he will indicate it is a failure.

I do not intend to go into the reasons for the likely failure of operation LIFT in any detail this evening. The reasons have been presented to this House in copious detail by numerous spokesmen of the opposition. All of the reasons are transparently obvious to the most casual observer. In summary, the opposition is arguing that Operation LIFT must be abandoned or substantially modified. Operation LIFT simply does not meet the farmers' needs; as a consequence they cannot or will not comply with its provisions.

In addition, opposition spokesmen have been saying that the plan is discriminatory in the extreme, especially with respect to areas such as the Interlake in Manitoba. Finally, the plan is an administrative nightmare. The validity of the arguments against operation LIFT which the opposition has been pressing upon the government is self-evident. Yet the government has not undertaken the entirely sensible action which members of the opposition parties have been recommending to them over the past several weeks. Why? I believe the government is not taking action because this plan was never really designed to work. That is, whether it meets the farmers' needs or not is entirely beside the point. That is not its purpose.

Operation LIFT was conceived by cynicism and born of arrogance. Operation LIFT is nothing more than another public relations effort by this government which seems to have advertising account executives hiding behind every door. It is a massive put-on. It is simply an attempt to "con" the city dweller into believing that this government is taking some action that will help the farmer. It is a "con" job.

I want to spend a moment on the circumstances in which operation LIFT was born. The farm cash income shortage on the Prairies had reached crisis proportions, so much so that people in the villages and the urban centres of the Prairies were beginning to be affected by it, beginning to sympathize with the farmers and beginning to demand action from the government. Operating on the assumption that they hold few rural ridings and that the cities must be held at any cost, the government conceived a plan which in terms relative to the size of the problem