

• (11:00 p.m.)

**Mr. Lang:** Write me a letter and I will reply.

**Mr. Baldwin:** If it is a letter which goes through the Post Office, the minister will probably get it by next July when he talks about making the first payments. For some months I, along with others in this House, have been dinning into the ears of the government the seriousness of the debt situation which faces farmers in western Canada, particularly in northern Saskatchewan and northern Alberta. The minister brushed aside these representations. He told the House he could take no action of the kind we proposed. Mr. Speaker, the average payment which might be expected under this program would, I venture to say, not amount to one-quarter of the interest payments which have to be met by farmers in western Canada this year.

The accumulation of interest and taxes to be paid will probably amount to four or five times the gross sum for which provision is made here—and there is no indication of what the net payment will be. Farmers cannot plant forage or otherwise vary their crops without spending a good deal of money. But there has been no indication of the amount they are likely to get, and in these circumstances I have no hesitation in saying that the sheer accumulation of debt falling on these unfortunate people of western Canada will amount to four or five times the likely net payment under this program.

The people of western Canada are practical. They know one cannot dispose of crops with a wave of a magic wand. They want to hear that the government has an intelligent and honest plan on a long-range basis for dealing with this problem. When I put this matter to him last Friday, the minister said he was in touch with the governments of the four other wheat producing countries in the hope of working out a scheme. What, in the name of Heaven, have he and his colleagues been doing for the last two years during which time the problem of wheat marketing has become increasingly serious and obvious?

The minister talks about rationalizing our stocks of wheat. What will these other countries do? Will they rationalize their stocks or will they, when they see that we have substantially reduced our accumulation of wheat, simply maintain supplies at the former level by growing more? As I was saying to the minister on Friday, assuming there is a substantial acreage put into summer fallow, what

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is likely to be done in the following year? Will this become a permanent arrangement? The minister suggests it will not. But if we look at history we find that allegedly temporary schemes of this nature have a habit of becoming permanent. In the same way this might become a permanent feature of the agricultural economy. This is what I fear, particularly bearing in mind the approach taken by a government which does not seem to know what its final plans will be.

I wish to revert, as I did on Friday, to the statement made by Mr. S. C. Hudson, a former director of economics for the Department of Agriculture. In a statement made on behalf of the Economic Council of Canada in a special report, he alleged the Canadian government had failed to deal with this problem in several specific aspects. There had been a lack of uniformity in protein content, a lack of flexibility in pricing and insufficient attention to marketing. This is in connection with wheat. Others have repeated this statement. Nevertheless, neither the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister without Portfolio, nor any of the members who have spoken from the government side have attempted to deal with this criticism.

Had either of the ministers, in conjunction with last Friday's announcement, indicated that there was a real intention of responding to these criticisms I am confident the people of western Canada would feel there was far more promise in the situation than they do today. It is my honest belief that when the farmers and the people in the small communities who serve them begin to realize how foolish, how defective is this scheme, in the sense that it is being offered as a cure for the difficulties in which western people find themselves, they will generate a tide of protest which will sweep through this country and end up here in Ottawa. The complaints the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) has received in connection with the iniquitous proposals in the white paper on taxation will be nothing to what will be said and done by the farmers in western Canada when they realize how defective is this scheme. The minister should take note because he is the one who, having sown this seed, will live to reap the whirlwind.

There are difficult tasks before us, we know. The previous government faced a task of this sort nine or ten years ago. We found that the market for rapeseed, which during the war had been considerable, was diminish-