

Mr. Speaker: Is it agreed that the House revert to motions?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

• (2:20 p.m.)

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, the ministerial meeting concerning wheat has concluded and I should like to bring to the attention of the House the communiqué which was issued:

1. Ministers and senior officials representing the five major wheat exporters, Argentina, Australia, Canada, the EEC and the United States, met in Ottawa on May 4 and 5 to discuss problems in the international wheat market, particularly those brought about by surplus production. The meeting reviewed the current market situation and noted that supplies available in the major exporting countries will be surplus to the anticipated requirements for the 1970-71 crop year, and that a solution to the problem of over-production was necessary if a healthy and stable international wheat market were to be achieved in the interest of both consumers and producers. Ministers noted that in some countries it is difficult to consider the wheat situation in isolation from the livestock feed market.

2. Ministers recognized that the major exporters had a common responsibility to regulate their production in a manner which will bring supplies into balance with opportunities in the international wheat market. Ministers considered that importing countries, particularly developed countries, also had responsibilities in this regard and they agreed to use every opportunity to encourage these countries to accept disciplines in their own production policies in the interest of expanding the international wheat market.

3. Ministers took note of the major contributions made by Canada to resolving the oversupply problem by the withdrawal of very substantial acreage from production in 1970. It was also noted that the United States had, for a number of years, operated a program of wheat acreage reduction, that Australia had recently established quotas substantially reducing wheat deliveries and that in Argentina production had declined in recent years due to climatic factors. The ministers further noted that the EEC had under consideration proposals aimed at a different price relationship between wheat and coarse grains and also at a substantial reduction of land and manpower in agriculture over the next few years.

4. Ministers noted that the urgent need to bring production into a better relationship with demand. They agreed that governments would have to keep production policies under continuing review so that timely and appropriate measures could be taken in the interest of achieving a healthy international market for wheat.

5. Ministers noted that different techniques were used by different wheat producing countries to maintain producer incomes. Ministers agreed that governments should exercise care in implementing new or existing programs of income support to avoid measures which could have the effect of stimulating uneconomic production.

6. Finally, ministers agreed that their governments would keep under continuing review the

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production policies of both exporters and importers and to this end they agreed to consult closely and anticipated meeting again in about six months.

Mr. George Muir (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, although we are pleased that the wheat exporting countries have finally been able to get together to discuss the problem of surplus production we note from the communiqué that no firm commitments have been made by other countries to follow the same course upon which Canada has embarked in drastically reducing wheat acreage. We would have hoped that the Canadian ministers and their officials would press upon the other nations the necessity of a multilateral agreement so that no one country would have to carry the load itself. We are sorry the minister did not take this occasion to assure the House and the country that these things will be done and that Canada can hope to resume the production necessary to maintain a viable farm economy.

While at the meeting the exporters agreed there should be no uneconomic production, the fact is that we see this happening every day of the week in other countries. I need only point out to the minister the arrangements under which the European Economic Community subsidizes the export of grain from France and other countries within the community to the detriment of countries like Canada where there is no such assistance. I believe this is the only country on the face of the earth where the farmers are expected to meet competition without any assistance from the government. It seems to me we are placing our farmers in an untenable position by agreeing that there be some sort of supply-management system that will only apply to ourselves and will leave the exporting countries of Europe and other areas pretty well on their own to make whatever arrangements they like.

I am disappointed that the communiqué could not have been such as to give some hope to our farmers that in the future Canada will be able to export in a market that is not heavily subsidized by the governments of other exporting countries.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, it would have been a better day if there had been better news. The communiqué simply says that the result of the discussions is that the other exporting nations have not agreed to go along with substantial acreage reductions. Of course this was probably not a great surprise to the minister since he has available to him the advice and knowledge of