

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, we looked at a great variety of material in arriving at this result, the cost per acre in maintaining the land in a state of minimum production, and being mindful, of course, of the saving that is in fact made by a farmer in his cost of production. So in that sense his stated minimum production figures are not particularly relevant. We had long discussions with the farm leaders about the amounts involved and the total cash position in arriving at the figures.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): In light of the criticisms voiced and statements made in the special report of the Economic Council of Canada, has the government any intention to bring forward proposals for long-range solutions to deal with the causes and not just the effects as was done in the minister's statement today?

Mr. Lang: With regard to some of the causes as stated in the Economic Council report, we have engaged in a most vigorous campaign to improve the sales effort in every way possible through legislation extending credit facilities, food aid programs, and in every other way. We also have under consideration many programs of a long-term nature designed to look at other aspects of the agricultural industry in an effort to allow the maximum benefit from his product to be returned to the farmer through the elimination of waste through inefficiency which results from the situation being not in the best possible condition.

Hon. George Hees (Prince Edward-Has-tings): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that Canada's sales of wheat and wheat flour are 31 per cent below what they were in the last crop year against a drop of only 6 per cent in the United States and again of over 50 per cent by Argentina and Australia, would the minister take the first opportunity on motions to outline what steps he and the government intend to take to bring our selling effort in respect of wheat and wheat flour far closer to those of our three major competitors?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, I have in fact referred to that matter in the statement I made on motions today. I trust the hon. member will eventually appreciate that the exports for the rest of this year indicate a very good record indeed.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, when the minister came up with this program of bonusing people for not pro-

ducing, was any thought given to soil conservation or soil erosion and the fact that his program may turn western Canada into a dust bowl such as we have seen in the past?

Mr. Lang: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we gave very careful consideration to this issue. The inclusion of two million acres of forage of course was related to the probable maximum amount of seed available, but in the actual development of the program we are making clear to farmers that the definition of summerfallow will include the planting of a cover crop to avoid erosion and soil problems to which the hon. member referred.

Mr. Woolliams: Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether the minister gave any thought to the fact that grass seed now costs more than 70 cents a pound and that his program will not fit into the economics of the agricultural industry so that it will be able to buy the seed?

Mr. Lang: Mr. Speaker, we did have a hard look at the amount of grass seed available. Of course that is a limiting factor in the conversion of acreage from wheat production into forage. It is for that reason, as I indicated, we have placed the two million acre figure as a limit on the amount on which payment would be made for conversion to forage this year.

Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister without Portfolio in charge of the Wheat Board. In making his announcement today of aid to western farmers he included a proposed quota system for the next crop year. In the past there has been a great deal of stress placed on equalizing the system across the whole wheat producing area. Could he outline to the House how the program of assistance works in conjunction with the quota system he has announced, because the two will be working at cross-purposes?

Mr. Lang: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the two are designed to work very much in a complementary fashion. The extended quota will in fact be obtained by farmers who maintain land in a fallow condition or who put it into forage and who will be unable to sell wheat from those acres. We anticipate there may be a total of approximately 53 million acres eligible for the wheat quota under this system and in those circumstances the quota on those acres next year would be 8 bushels per acre.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker—