

Wheat Acreage Reduction

For instance, I wish to quote a small article reporting a speech by no less a personage than a former member of the House of Commons from the riding of Assiniboia, who is now a Senator and who at one time, under the regime of former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, was promised the agricultural portfolio. Therefore, I feel hon. members opposite must have confidence in what he says. It is headed, "Argue Criticizes Policy" and reads as follows:

Senator Hazen Argue Saturday called the government wheat policy shocking and unacceptable.

Mr. Argue charged the government of tampering with the quota system and changing the rules to decree that farmers shall cut back on wheat acreage.

"Surely in a democracy where participation ought to be sought, no policy should ever be introduced that has such a revolutionary effect before being given a thorough airing amongst those it will affect," Mr. Argue said in a telephoned statement from Ottawa.

Mr. Argue also claimed that \$6 an acre is an unrealistically small payment and said the cost of summerfallow is that much or more; consequently there is no payment for land taxes and there is no financial compensation for loss of the crop.

He suggested the new wheat policy be placed before public meetings similar to the manner of Mr. Benson's procedure with the white paper on taxation.

● (11:50 p.m.)

Mr. Argue also suggested that a House of Commons committee should study the proposals and conduct a mail survey involving the Prairies' 180,000 grain producers.

"It is essential that policies have the support of the producers," said Mr. Argue.

Here is another excerpt under the heading "Grain Expert Offers Views". This is the president of Federal Grain Limited, Mr. George Sellers, and he gives the government a pat on the back saying that the program should prove effective and he qualifies it by saying:

"We are concerned about some of the mechanics of the announced program," said George Sellers in a news release—

Mr. Sellers said the wheat surplus is not distributed equally between all producers and therefore many farmers who have no surplus will likely grow wheat in the coming crop year on part of their acreage.

He added that it was doubtful if there can be much more than a 1,000,000-acre increase in forage crops because the announced program as some forage seed is limited in supply.

"We are concerned that many producers might attempt to grow forage crops in areas that are not adaptable to their production such as the Palliser triangle," he said.

[Mr. Southam.]

"This is of particular concern today because a large percentage of the surplus wheat is located in this area."

Mr. Sellers warned that with the marked increase in summer fallow acreage during the coming year, soil drifting could become a serious problem unless special precautions are taken.

This, of course, has been emphasized by many people already. Other newspaper headlines read "Wheat Plan Admission of Failure," "Cautious Optimism Greeted Wheat Proposal," "Hardly Worth While," "Feast or Famine". I should like to quote briefly from a letter I received from a farmer. I do not know the man personally, but from his letter he appears to represent the average type of farmer and he puts some facts very pointedly. The letter is dated February 28, from a Mr. W. H. Trudgeon of Whitewood, Saskatchewan who says:

A word of warning. Dire consequences may result unless these repressive measures are withdrawn from the newly designed regulations affecting delivery. The so-called incentive payments on land taken out of production of wheat is almost totally inadequate for most farmers in this area. The outlined program is unrealistic in the extreme. If the government is going to dictate how many acres any particular producer may plant, they must be able to provide that producer with an adequate subsidy per bushel in order to help his income up to an acceptable level. The policy seems rigid and also complicated. I would suggest that meetings of the government officials concerned take place all over the grain growing area of the west with the farmers concerned because conditions are varied. What would help some farmers would strangle others, possibly the majority. It may be sufficient to observe that time is of the essence. The anger of the people here about such meddling with our basic freedoms is barely suppressed with such trash as has been delivered to an otherwise law-abiding people. We expect action to protect our right to run our own affairs at least with some sense of personal freedom. We await your reactions in this matter with interest.

Mr. Speaker, that gives you just a few samples of the current thought in connection with this matter. In conclusion I should like to ask the Minister without Portfolio who has introduced this acreage reduction who he consulted in western Canada before bringing in this plan. He has mentioned discussing it with farm organizations but strange to say, when I was in Regina early today I was informed that the government of Saskatchewan was calling an emergency cabinet meeting today to discuss this plan and its failings. I do not have to remind hon. members what the political complexion of the Saskatchewan government is. Surely the minister and the government should have had consultations with the premiers and the ministers of the