

Wheat Acreage Reduction

measures. The government says it is going to spend a huge amount of money on the farmers, but in actual fact this will never come true.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, a number of members of this House who are practical farmers with an adequate knowledge of the situation have torn into shreds the program announced by the minister last Friday, black Friday, the day the cabinet representatives from western Canada sold their country down the river. These members have made wide enough holes in that program to drive through a dozen combines.

The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas), a supporter of the government, very effectively disclosed all the defects and faults in this scheme. Of course, he ended up by accepting the challenge of the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Lang) to become a patriotic Canadian. Despite all the great faults and evils of this scheme, as a Liberal backbencher he felt compelled to follow the idea. It is very difficult for me to understand this program in light of the very searching and telling criticism which he so effectively put forward.

The Secretary of Agriculture of the United States thought this was a great scheme for Canada. He congratulated the minister and the government of Canada for their fortitude and courage. There has been a program similar to this in effect for a number of years in the United States. This program in many respects has been a complete disaster which has separated town and country and has forced people apart. It has not been a good and effective program. I think what the American Secretary of Agriculture was really doing was saying, "Thank goodness another sucker came into the game," and tongue in cheek he laughed out loud. He was glad to welcome the Canadian minister into the club of those who engage in this act of stupidity.

The minister talks about patriotism. He has invited us to enter into a holy crusade. He wants us to come to the lobby where he will pin red crosses on us so that we can go fighting as knights on our chargers to topple down the mountain of wheat. We are not against this program because it was introduced by the government but because it is not a good program. In many respects it is defective. This is why I want to speak on it briefly.

As the hon. member for Assiniboia and other hon. members have said, this program

[Mr. Downey.]

or something akin to it should have been introduced a year or a year and a half ago as a temporary measure, with a firm indication that within a year the government would make a far more serious and permanent attempt to solve the problem. We all saw the problem. No one knows better than Your Honour that not one week has passed without the minister being questioned with regard to it. We have put forward suggestions in a constructive and objective way, but the abominable no-men on the other side refused to listen to the proposals which we advanced.

The hon. member for Assiniboia let something slip today. He indicated that this scheme was being considered last summer, yet today the Minister without Portfolio and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) are unable to answer concisely and with a degree of certainty simple ordinary questions about how the program is going to work. They are flying by the seat of their pants making up the rules as they go along. They have not thought the program through.

Is there going to be legislation? Is this money going to be passed as an item in the estimates? What are the regulations? To what act are they going to be attached? What is the authority for passing the regulations? The minister nods. It will take more than nods, Mr. Speaker. We still have some semblance of parliamentary government left, although certain members opposite are doing their best to reduce it by attrition. Until they succeed it will be essential for parliamentary amenities to be observed. There will have to be some means of appropriating this money. Questions with regard to the amount have been asked by a dozen hon. members and by people all over Canada.

I have received a number of phone calls and letters from people who are very interested in knowing how this program will work. A sensible question was asked by the hon. member for Swift Current-Maple Creek (Mr. McIntosh), which the minister was unable to answer. He asked a question about the situation where one man had all his land under summer fallow last year and another had all his land in crop. How will this plan apply in that situation? People want to know precisely how this program will affect them. My hon. friend from Battle River (Mr. Downey) has inquired about his own situation, as have a number of other hon. members. There have been no answers to these questions.