

Agricultural Policies

surplus reduction plan, commonly known as Operation Lift. While we can find some faults in this plan—as I have on occasion, notably in the debate on March 2—one must give credit to the government for being willing to use as much as \$100 million for the purpose of trying to help farmers get supplies somewhat more in proportion to demand. It may well be that farmers will not participate fully enough in the program to earn all of the \$100 million, but many in southeastern Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba are beginning to have a higher regard for this offer because weather conditions have prevented them from seeding wheat and thus the amount of land they will not be able to seed at all this year will be increased.

The point I want to make is that the government, in spite of its determination to control inflation by holding down government expenditures as well as by other methods, has been willing to devote over \$150 million in the supplementary estimates for 1969-70 to the benefit of agriculture. This is not the action of a government which has deliberately set out to depress the agricultural economy, as suggested in the motion we are discussing this afternoon.

Many sectors of the farm economy are doing fairly well, as the Minister of Agriculture has already stated this afternoon. However, as he also said, the grain industry is in difficulty. Let me quote just a few figures for Saskatchewan, the main wheat growing province. In 1966 the income from wheat in that province, including final wheat board payments, was \$629 million; in 1967 it was \$642 million; in 1968 it was \$553 million, and in 1969 it dropped to \$318 million, about half the level of the wheat income in 1966 and 1967. Of course, this problem has largely resulted from a general decline in world wheat trade. It is quite apparent that a concerted drive for sales by the Wheat Board, supported by new government facilities, is starting to pay off in increased sales, which is the best way to solve our farm income problems.

A few days ago our dollar was set free in response to market pressures. It immediately jumped about four cents in terms of the U.S. dollar. The Wheat Board, in order to maintain our competitive position, had to immediately drop the price of wheat by six cents a bushel. The prices of other grains and export farm products have also dropped. I now call again on the government to support the price of export wheat at \$1.95½, which was the agreed minimum in the International Grain Arrange-

[Mr. Douglas (Assinboia).]

ment. The IGA is a government agreement which was broken by government action, but farmers seem to be expected to carry the burden. Now that the burden will be even heavier because of the revaluation of our dollar, it is more than ever the government's responsibility to support the price of wheat as stated in the IGA.

There could, of course, be some minimal benefits to agriculture as a result of the reduced prices of imports which should follow the value of the change in our dollar. I call on the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford) to take steps to ensure that any such reductions in prices of imports are fully and promptly passed on to the consumers of Canada, many of whom are farmers who probably have to purchase much more goods than the average consumer.

The task force on agriculture has now made its final report. Canada has never, under any government, had a comprehensive, national agricultural policy. I am sure the government will lose no time in devising, in close consultation with farmers and farm organizations, policies to promote a vital, progressive and economical agricultural industry in this country. I cannot agree with some of the things the task force has recommended but I certainly approve of their suggestion that farm policy should be directed toward improving the per capita farm income in Canada. Nearly half of our farm families are suffering from below normal incomes. I am sure that the government, with its demonstrated sympathetic concern for the welfare of agriculture, can be relied upon to produce long-term policies which will continue to benefit this important industry. I urge them to lose no time in coming to grips with this important responsibility.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. I will not follow it with a motion and I do not raise it for the purpose of inviting debate. I do it because under the rules of the House I must raise it at the earliest possible opportunity. It involves an issue which I consider to be a breach of privilege.

I have just been advised through press reports and otherwise that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) has issued a statement in Winnipeg with regard to the imposition of wage controls and other pertinent measures. I rise first to object strongly to this being done in a place other than this House and, second, to point out that in the face of a number of