

Wheat Acreage Reduction

Mr. Olson: The Minister without Portfolio was asked that question a number of times. I do not think we have considered it deeply enough at this point to say we have a precise kind of program which will be used for the allocation of permits and quotas for the 1971-72 crop year. There will obviously be some major changes in the traditional pattern that has been used until this program goes into effect.

As has been pointed out, if the projections we have made are proven to be correct, we can produce and sell about 20 million acres of wheat per year starting in 1971 and from then on, provided we get our inventory into a reasonable commercial position now. Therefore, we will have to take into account that position. We will also have to take into account—and this information is not available to use yet—how much response and participation there is in the program, because our regulations for the ensuing or following year would be dependent on how successful this program is in reducing the inventory of wheat.

Mr. Peters: There is the intention, I presume, that there will be a relationship between the performance of those who have participated in this program and those who have not?

Mr. Olson: I think that would be a fair assumption.

Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I prepared some remarks prior to the speech of the Minister without Portfolio from Saskatoon-Humboldt (Mr. Lang). While I hope to get those remarks on the record, I should like to make a comment or two about some of the suggestions he made in a speech in part of my riding. First, I wonder whether the minister meant to imply that farm leaders suggested or agreed to this plan. Perhaps they have, and maybe they should have the right to say yes or no; but I wonder whether this is what the minister intended to imply. I throw that out so he can answer as he sees fit.

The minister spoke in a town in my riding. I talked to a farmer who was there. The minister was correct—there was quite a large crowd. They listened to him with some interest, but I do not think with any enthusiasm. I do not know that they were even particularly critical at that stage. They wanted to know about the program and were there because they were interested. The comments I have

[Mr. Peters.]

heard are to the effect that there is a certain amount of wary skepticism about the whole thing. It is necessary to explain to the farmers what this plan means because I am sure they do not understand it. I do not really understand it.

Today the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Douglas) rose in the House and asked what will happen to farmers who cut back their acreage last year. When one of the main government supporters finds it necessary to ask this question—and I assume he helped draft the plan—one can understand why the farmers might wonder about it. If the hon. member for Assiniboia was not taken into the government's confidence, I suggest this is an insult to him. He is a man who really knows what is going on in the country.

Frequently when hearing comments from ministers on that side of the House I have not been impressed by the fact that they have any real knowledge of what is going on. There was mention of equity in the speech of the Minister without Portfolio and the speech of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson). When thinking of the constituency I represent, I can see that this is going to be quite awkward. My constituency contains part of the Palliser triangle, parkland in the North, some quite large and some quite small farms. I represent some farmers who co-operated in reducing acreage last year and some who seeded large acreage. It is obvious that any application of this plan will be awkward.

The minister spoke about statesmanship in helping him sell this program. I should like to make a comment or two on that, as a responsible person. I have listed four points which I think might have some validity. This program might have its good features, and I want to mention them. The first good feature is the forage program. The idea of paying \$10 per acre of land put into forage might be very acceptable and worth while in attempting to reduce the wheat surplus. I can see a hard-headed farmer taking his poorest land and seeding it in grass. I know I would do so and I would accept this as being a good feature. Second, there will be some cash flow in the country. I accept this as being of value and beneficial, but I do not think it will come anywhere near \$100 million or \$140 million. I suggest to the minister that if he attains \$50 million he will do well.

I had an urgent phone call shortly after 8 o'clock from a farmer in the Herschel district. He said he did not think there would be even