



A MODEST MEMBER

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Where did the orderly markets go?

I must admit that since Eccles gave me that lecture about the “traditional” wheat grower, I have been soft pedalling that line. Not that I agree with him, mind you, but I am not quite sure.

But when it comes to the virtues of the wheat stabilisation plan I have had no doubts, and I could really pull all the stops out. Even Fred the farmer, who is not given to easy praise, told me, after I had addressed a farmers’ meeting, that I had done “quite well.”

I pointed out that the wheat stabilisation scheme was “orderly marketing” and there was prolonged applause, and I really felt pleased and just a little embarrassed.

Then I went on to say if we could have orderly marketing for wheat, why not for wool? Good stuff, it was, and well-received.

There were a few passing references to “the cost of production” price of \$1.72 a bushel for home consumption wheat, just to show I had a real grasp of the subject.

I was so pleased with the reception, that I made up a press release for the local papers. Then like a fool I showed it to Eccles, the economist.

I pointed out that there was not a single reference to the “traditional” wheat grower and waited with confidence for his approbation.

But it didn’t come. He read it through with wrinkled brow, and sniffed every now and again, and I could tell he wasn’t pleased.

“What’s wrong with it?” I ask querulously (and foolishly), so he proceeded to tell me.

Then he went on to point out that cost of production price of \$1.72 was also economic nonsense and that it was obvious that anyone who couldn’t grow wheat at well under that “cost of production” ought not to be in the business.

And if I wanted proof of that I could look at how the farmers have been rushing to grow wheat at a price well under that.

“Evidently either the cost of production figure is phoney or the farmers are soft in the head,” he growled.

I told my wife, Mavis, what Eccles had said.

“I don’t think you ought to talk to him, dear,” she said. “You will never become a Minister if you get a reputation for heresy.”

She is right, I suppose. The trouble is, I don't talk to him, he talks to me!