

*Farm Loans Interest Rebate Act*

decades. It has enabled the industry to grow and not only make money for itself but to start the entire country on an upward spiral.

While I have said this before, I repeat that when this country was in a recession in 1961—not nearly as desperate as today's recession—it was the farmers of western Canada who started the country moving forward again. This fact was admitted publicly by the Governor of the Bank of Canada in 1964 and by the then Minister of Finance, the Hon. Walter Gordon. The recovery started because the farmer immediately spent the money he received from selling his goods abroad on farm machinery, trucks and the expansion of his operations. That marked the beginning of the upward spiral which we have been looking back on for the last 21 years.

This legislation which we are so slightly amending was the main reason for our recovery at that time. I suggest that today's recession will be resolved in the same manner. When I consider the growth in the export of various commodities such as grains, sulphur, the tremendous potential for potash and fibres in the forest industry in the next 20 years, I believe that we will not have too many rivals in Canada to the rate of growth in the agricultural industry. Therefore, the objective is for Governments in all Provinces to reinforce this positive aspect of our current situation.

This particular legislation is merely a type of small subsidy for a few hundred farmers. It will achieve very little in solving what I and the Hon. Member for Lisgar are discussing. The entire industry from one end of Canada to the other has great potential if it receives the proper attention and particularly if it does not cost the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) and his minions any money. Since this legislation is a charge on the Minister of Finance, one cannot expect him to contribute very much money to it. It is a handout in the form of a subsidy of 4 per cent for a few hundred farmers who are in dire straits.

I would like to discuss the ideas which originated from this side of the House two years ago but were supported by Members from all Parties in the debates which have taken place since then. I will not repeat all the speeches which I delivered on this subject but I will refer the House, if it is interested, to the short speech which I made on February 1, 1982 dealing with the Farm Credit Corporation. I invite Members to reread that speech, which dealt with the philosophies behind the Farm Credit Corporation.

On March 18, 1982 I spoke on an NDP motion about interest rates. I would highly recommend reading that speech with particular regard to this Bill which we are now debating. I suggest that interest rates are the key to implementing this forward motion of the investment of money into those things which produce more wealth for which there is a market. Finally, on March 29, 1982 I applied the same philosophy to housing in Canada, using the same principle for those who want to own their own homes as we are using for farmers.

I refer those speeches to Members who are interested in order to illustrate that there are ways of positively assisting this cutting edge industry of agriculture, which can not only

make more money for itself and a million and a half people directly employed in that industry, but assist the 25 per cent of the economy which is affected by agriculture. This growth can begin right away without waiting three or four years for a projection on Canada's future.

This has been possible for approximately the last year, particularly with the amendments that all Parties recommended to the Farm Credit Corporation this spring. As a result of those amendments, the Minister was able to insert a Clause which allowed the Farm Credit Corporation to borrow money "by any means". Those words "by any means" are the open door to any manner of obtaining money for the Farm Credit Corporation without having to go to the Department. I hoped and prayed that the Minister would seize that opportunity to march through the open door, parade through it if he wished, and say: "Look, what I am doing".

When I had finished my speech on March 29, 1982 I think it is quite clear that the Minister had supported me. I will let Hon. Members be the judge of that. I will quote his words. I had just finished speaking when the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) replied:

Mr. Speaker, later on I will touch on the presentation made by the Hon. Member concerning this bill. As Minister of Agriculture, I must admit that I agree with much of what he says.

He went on to say:

I also have the legal advisers which we talked about, and Ministers who are not lawyers, but have to make decisions, still have to depend on them to some extent. I will touch on that point later.

I would take that as rather direct evidence that at the moment I finished speaking—I hope for Members on all sides—he realized that what I was proposing was not only beneficial for agriculture and all of Canada but would not cost the treasury anything. It was simply a question of getting around one or two small legal points which I had been trying to explain how to accomplish.

That was six months ago. I was naturally hoping that when this Bill came forward, the Minister of Agriculture would have seized on this all-Party support to introduce the necessary legal requirements to make my proposals the will of Parliament and therefore the will of the Government of Canada. This Bill will not accomplish that. Instead, it has the opposite effect of continuing the practice during the last number of years of giving hand-outs to farmers. If I have learned one thing from my fairly lengthy association with farmers, it is that the great majority of them do not want hand-outs. They just want the Government to get off their backs. They want a chance to have a fair grasp at the apple. They want the right to make their decisions, and if they make mistakes they will be glad to pay for them.

I look back with great enthusiasm to that period in 1958 and 1959 when, out of 256,000 who had permit books to sell grain in western Canada, 209,000 signed a petition calling for a hand-out. I did not blame one of them. The farm leader said that the answer to one's problem, when one cannot sell one's grain, is the handout.