

An hon. Member: Funny money.

Mr. Nowlan: My friend from Moncton says "Funny money". I did not hear the 2 per cent speech of the Minister of Agriculture. In fact, someone said earlier tonight that there was a program called Project '75. I should like to ask this minister, with all the kindness I can muster with my Irish hat, why we do not have a Project '72, letting the interest go down? This may just happen to help the farmers of this land more than all the amendments made to the Farm Credit Act.

• (2040)

An hon. Member: What about the good parts?

Mr. Nowlan: I will come to the good qualities of the minister later. I should like to refer to a very meaningful paragraph in this pamphlet which says that with some difficult economic conditions, expenditures for farm housing tend to be postponed more than loans for other purposes. About two-thirds of the loans went to the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, where about two-thirds of the commercial farms are located and two-thirds of farm products are produced. It says that in line with the general trend, the number of loans to incorporated farm borrowers declined 18 per cent in 1970-71, with a decline in volume of loans of about 25 per cent. The average size loan to incorporated farms declined by \$4,400 and amounted to \$26,500 per member compared to an average of \$28,400 for all farms.

I could continue to read much more, but the point of this paragraph and many others in this very interesting and revealing pamphlet is that some people somewhere decided that the Farm Credit Corporation was not fulfilling the purpose for which it was conceived. I know the minister is sincerely concerned about the problems of agriculture in this land, but from time to time I differ with him on how to solve, resolve and tackle them.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nowlan: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Lessard), for whom I have great personal endearment, should not interrupt my speech, because if he does I shall recall a speech he would like to recant today. When he goes back to la belle province this weekend he may talk to one of his political kindred souls who may say to him he had better get down to Liberal philosophy in Quebec rather than follow the Social Credit philosophy in which he at one time believed.

As I started to say earlier, we in Nova Scotia realized the difficulties many years ago. The Nova Scotia farm loan board was the first body to be involved in farm financing. It is my understanding that as long as you can show evidence of some potential of performance you can get \$100,000 from this board. This is what we are talking about regarding this national act. This is a sad reflection on the psychology, philosophy and mentality of those within the federal Department of Agriculture. At long last we are catching up with the little province of Nova Scotia in adopting a maximum level for individual farmers of \$100,000 per farm. That is in fact what the important amendments before us attempt to do.

Farm Credit Act

The amendments suggest that we should not worry just about the individual farmer, we should try to develop something that seems to have gone out of fashion in this permissive society. This is a society in which we are supposed to be born in a cradle, rocked in a cradle and spilled from the cradle into the grave without having to produce anything, showing no initiative or enthusiasm and requiring no incentive. The members of this party believe in something else. I question sometimes some of the things hon. members believe in, and they very often question what I have to say. I have no compunction about questioning what they say and they have none in questioning what I say.

We belong to the Progressive Conservative party which at the moment, but only for the moment, happens to be Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The members of this party have one thing in common: we belong to one of the most independent breeds you can find. I know the Minister of Agriculture would love to be part of that breed because he is independent, as indicated by his exercise of independence in moving from the far left to the middle right. He did not move to the far right but to the middle, comfortable and easy right.

This Minister of Agriculture was pointed out to me, as a new member when I first came here, as a man with parliamentary acumen. It was easy for him to walk from the far left to the easy middle right and not take up the challenge of the opposition. This helped to dilute some of my respect for him, though I give him credit for sagacity and parliamentary sense. It is much more difficult to move from the far left to the government side of the House than it is to move from the far left to the seats of the mighty. Pierre Burton wrote a book entitled "The Comfortable Pew", but there is nothing more comfortable than the easy and comfortable seats on the other side of this institution.

It was a disappointment to me when this Minister of Agriculture, who does have a lot to offer in this Parliament of Canada, moved from the soft seats of the Créditistes to the easy seats of the establishment rather than take up the challenge of the opposition. This minister has not accepted the challenge to make changes. We want to change the Farm Credit Act to make it meaningful to the young farmers of Canada. It must become meaningful if there is to be any life left on the farmlands of this country. Let us give the Minister of Agriculture all the benefit of the doubt in respect of these Farm Credit Act amendments, because I believe in his sincerity. I question some of his purposes but I do not question his sincerity.

One of the fundamental problems in any debate in this chamber concerning this topic is that we are confined by Bill C-5 and its amendments to the Farm Credit Act. This measure was supposed to provide easier access to the credit pools of the Farm Credit Corporation, particularly for farmers who need financing. What is the sense of debating this bill in isolation, when at the last session of Parliament we passed something called a tax reform bill which instituted certain tax changes and penalized the productive farmer? When we look at the details of the basic herd as defined in that change, which is a rather complicated equation to anyone from the east or the west, we find a different situation.