

Supply—Forestry and Rural Development

[English]

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Mr. Chairman, the hour is late and the ministers are leaving. However, there is one matter which I would like to bring to the minister's attention, having to do with the ARDA program. This has application in my particular region but similar circumstances could prevail in other places across the country. I am sorry that I do not have the full particulars on this, but it has recently come to my attention—I have not had time to gather the information, but the problem is that if I wait until I gather information the minister's estimates will be passed and I will have no chance to raise these matters—that in the Matheson-Val Gagne area, which is known as "the little clay belt of the north" a program has been established under the ARDA program for the assembling of land for cattle ranches. The Timmins riding is known mostly for its mines but I want to point out that it also has fertile agricultural lands. The local farmers are incensed at this program, and I think for very good reasons. We must realize that these men have spent their lives in clearing this land and bringing it into production. They have always been faced with the double problem of a small population involving a small market locally, combined with the high cost of transportation.

Another problem which has faced the farmers in that area is the fact that they have been frozen out of local facilities. In fact the last dairy in the region is now on its last legs, and trying desperately to keep the operation running. At the same time these farmers, in common with most small farmers in the country, have been faced with the problems of trying to modernize their operation in spite of the high costs involved. The result has been a desperate shortage of capital. They have had to struggle along on their own. They realize that with the present trend, where valuable farm land in southern Ontario is being overrun by factories, it will not be too long before their land will become much more valuable than it has been in the past.

The program which I mention involves the joining of the two governments to supply capital to some outsider to squeeze them out at fire sale prices. They feel very bitter about it, holding the view, and possibly justifiably so, that if this capital were made available to them they would be able to do the job themselves. Unfortunately they cannot get the capital to operate, modernize and enlarge their operation to make it an economic unit.

[Mr. Asselin.]

As one farmer told me, the government is prepared to supply the capital to some joker from the south to buy the farmer out, but they will not give the farmer the opportunity to do the job himself. I do not know how widespread this is.

As I mentioned earlier, I do not have the details of this particular program, but if we wait until we get them we will not have an opportunity to raise this matter under the minister's estimates. I think this is something which should be looked into in considering the success of the program, because surely the minister and his officials must realize that if anybody can cope with the weather conditions during the long winters and with other conditions, it will be the man who has spent his life on a farm in the north. Someone who may be an excellent farmer in the south may come up there and, not being used to the conditions, can come quite a cropper.

I am raising this point in the last few minutes available so as to bring it to the minister's attention, with the hope that this particular situation can receive more study than it has in the past.

• (5:50 p.m.)

[Translation]

Mr. Mongrain: Mr. Chairman, to share in the spirit of co-operation which has prevailed from the start in the debate on this bill, I shall speak only two minutes and cut down my remarks to concentrate on one specific suggestion I should like to address to the hon. Minister of Forestry and Rural Development (Mr. Sauvé) in the hope that he might eventually graft that idea on the legislation which governs the ARDA program.

This is what I should like to suggest to the minister, which he might look into in conjunction with the provinces. Two or three months every summer, countless students are free, in need of work; they flood the labour market with the result that several of them cannot find work, cannot earn the money they need to help defray the cost of their studies, especially at high school level. Might it not be possible to implement a project, for instance, for massive reforestation, or something similar to give work to these young students who can work?

I feel the minister would be killing two birds with one stone: reforestation or similar work would be taken care of; in addition, students would be kept busy who otherwise would stay idle during the summer months; it would help others to earn money to defray part of the cost of their studies, thereby