

Mr. Rose: We will all be big producers, like Premier Bennett!

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of competition and free enterprise, not for free enterprise—

Mr. Speaker, the Cr ditistes have a solution to offer in the field of finance because they have detected the problem. Without becoming socialists, we are in favour of private enterprise. We want to respect the small producers and we are offering a solution to the financial problems of today's small producers. We offer a solution for the financing of public capital as well as private enterprise and inventories which would allow producers to live in a private enterprise system.

[English]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, after hearing our colleagues in the other two opposition parties tonight, I wonder how outnumbered one can get when it comes to the position of agriculture whether in Quebec, British Columbia or anywhere else.

Farm credit and its provision is, of course, a necessary part of agricultural policy. There has been no argument about that from any member of the House since the debate started. The question really is: To what ends will farm credit be applied and used? It is all very well to increase borrowing capacity to \$100,000, but if this means an interest bill of between \$7,000 and \$8,000 a year to a farmer operating one or two sections of land whose net income is only \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year then, to quote the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), it is the road to bankruptcy.

• (2120)

If no more than farm credit is incorporated into the policies of this government or of any government, then we will continue down the road that has been deliberately trodden by the present government and the Conservative government before it, that of reducing the rural population of Canada. Unless farm incomes are sufficiently high to carry interest costs and repay principal, then the farmers are not only being led into bankruptcy but unless farm costs are held down as well, the cost-price squeeze accomplishes the government's objective of eliminating people on the land. That can be the only purpose of the present government. The practice of the government has been to denude rural Canada.

The government says its policy is to produce a viable agricultural industry. Farmers can be more efficient, says the government, if there are fewer people on the farm. If there are fewer people on the farm, then of necessity you must depopulate towns, villages and small cities. This is the risk the government is prepared to take in the name of what they call efficiency. In order to bring about this efficiency, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) is prepared to give to farmers a credit of \$100,000. If they live long enough to pay it back, fine. If they do not, the government will write it off and will be rid of yet another farmer.

Both the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board (Mr. Lang)—and may the Lord continue to save us—and the Minister of Agriculture have repeatedly rejected the recommendations of the task force on

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agriculture. Repeatedly they have said that report is not government policy, that the task force recommendations are only a report. But every piece of legislation that the ministers have brought to this chamber since that report was brought down has been designed to implement the task force recommendations and conclusions.

Once again we have a sneaker in this bill. Under clause 1 the Minister of Agriculture is sneaking in in his sneakers. He has yet to present any legislation detailing his so-called small farm redevelopment program. If he gets his way in this bill he will empower the Governor in Council to implement the program without this House or any farm organization even seeing the program beforehand.

An hon. Member: Why don't you people shut up?

Mr. Benjamin: If hon. members behind the curtains are going to start heckling me, perhaps they would come out front and do so. The other little sneaker that the Minister of Agriculture has in this legislation is that he will be able in his own way to duplicate services that are now provided by several of the provinces, whether they be ag-rep services, lending services, grants, loans for various operations such as hog raising, and so on.

This is a catch-up operation on the part of the federal government. The federal government is behind certain provinces in the country. I am not giving all the credit to Saskatchewan and Manitoba; there are one or two other provinces that the federal government is behind and this program is the Minister of Agriculture's way of trying to catch up without bringing in legislation. He can also use the program as a club over the heads of the other provinces, or as a bargaining lever.

In this regard I was very interested to hear the remarks made by the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) who quoted what the National Farmers Union had to say about the program. A couple of weeks ago I heard the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) ask the minister in charge of the Wheat Board whether, as a result of the sale of the national grain company to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, he could arrange for the boxcars and shipping orders assigned to Federal Grain to be divided among the other grain companies.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Benjamin: So here we have the hon. member for Mackenzie as the friend of the private grain companies. When the private grain trade bought up other private companies, I do not recall any Tory asking whether or not their shipping orders and boxcars would be divided up, but it is a different story with the wheat pool.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) on a point of order.

Mr. Horner: While I do not want to constrict in any way the socialist party of Canada, surely the hon. member should stick to the question at hand, which is the lending of larger sums of money to farmers. This bill is not concerned with the grain trade and with whether or not a