

Farm Credit Act

minister says the emphasis is on small loans. My point is that the emphasis has been, to far too great an extent, on the larger loans. I ask the minister to substantiate his own statement.

Mr. Hamilton: I wonder whether the hon. member would accept a table that I had worked out today and broken down more roughly into headings of \$5,000 and under and \$10,000 and under.

Mr. Argue: No, Mr. Chairman, I do not mind any tables going on the record. I am not particular myself. If the minister wishes to put tables on the record, it is all right with me. But they will not show it. I submit to the minister that they will not show it at all, when you have ranges of up to \$5,000 and from \$5,000 to \$10,000. I would ask him to ask his officials—and I am sure they have the figures readily available—to give the committee this information which will show the actual distribution of the loans.

Mr. Hamilton: The only thing I wish to point out was that if you want in that breakdown of \$5,000 and less, which most of us I think would consider would be the information he was after, and \$5,000 to \$10,000 as the next grade, then I have it already. If I am obliged to go back and break it down into all these categories he mentioned, the time factor might enter into the picture. I cannot guarantee when it will be ready.

Mr. Argue: I would ask the minister to go back to his officials and ask for a breakdown. This has been a central point. It has been of interest to the members of the Liberal party, to the minister and to hon. members opposite. I think the committee deserves this kind of information. I am sure that his officials will have it readily available in their files.

The Deputy Chairman: I recognize the hon. member for Villeneuve.

Mr. Asselin: May I ask a question of the minister?

Some hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Chairman: The minister's time has expired. If any questions are to be asked of the minister and we are to have an answer to them it is necessary to have the unanimous consent of the committee; otherwise I would call on the hon. member for Villeneuve.

Some hon. Members: No.

The Deputy Chairman: I recognize the hon. member for Villeneuve.

Mr. Asselin: Mr. Chairman, may I ask—

The Deputy Chairman: There is not unanimous consent. I recognize the hon. member for Villeneuve.

(Translation):

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Chairman, in the last few days we have been considering—

(Text):

Mr. Argue: Not on the table—

Mr. Caouette: Pardon me?

(Translation):

Mr. Argue: Excuse me.

Mr. Caouette: In the last few days, we have been considering the advisability of increasing the lending capacity of the corporation from \$300 to \$400 million so as to provide further assistance to eastern farmers.

We have always noted, under a Liberal as well as a Conservative government, that eastern farmers were treated differently from western farmers.

When the government suggests that we should increase the number of loans in Quebec and in the maritime provinces, we sincerely believe that this is not the proper way to settle the problem. As a matter of fact, Quebec farmers will go deeper into debt and will not necessarily be able to sell their products.

I am of the opinion that the important thing now for Canadian agriculture is to establish in the east a policy similar to the one followed in the western part of the country. For instance, when the purchase of the wheat production of the west is guaranteed, the western farmers feel more at ease than when the eastern farmers are left without any possibility of selling their products.

And even though farmers from Quebec or the maritime provinces get into debt for \$200, \$300 or \$400 millions, if they cannot sell their production in the fall, it is easy to understand that they will not even be able to honour their obligations, even if at the time the loan is granted it enables them to live a little better than now, and some day, in two, five or ten years from now, they will be in the same situation as today.

What we cannot possibly imagine and what we cannot accept, in Canada, is that, after 200 or 300 years of toil on a farm handed down from father to son, from generation to generation, we should have farmers who are in debt to such an extent that they can no longer operate their farms, and this even after getting provincial or federal loans. Such is the result of a financial system not adapted to our potentialities.

Mr. Chairman, more and more we hear it said that our farms are being abandoned.