

other criteria. The Minister of Justice tabled a potentially significant document on that subject yesterday.

I received a telephone call yesterday from a 26-year-old man from British Columbia who said he had been at an Armed Forces recruiting office yesterday afternoon and was told: "We are not actively encouraging recruitment of those above the age of 25."

That telephone call distressed me because I had hoped that when we talked about human rights, and extending the rights of individuals, regardless of age, that we would not have government departments in the field not observing the spirit and letter of the law. I should like to know what I can tell that young man today.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): First of all, I will have to ascertain the facts. If my honourable friend will give me the name of the person, the time and date of the incident, and all other facts that are available, I will make an inquiry into the matter for him.

AGRICULTURE

FARM DEBT REVIEW—ROLE OF PANELS

Hon. Hazen Argue: Honourable senators, my question is for the Leader of the Government in the Senate. As the leader will know, approximately 75 per cent of the farm debt is held outside of the Farm Credit Corporation. The Minister of Finance, in his Budget speech, stated:

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will introduce legislation to establish Farm Debt Review Panels to provide advice and assistance in restructuring farmers' debt.

I should like to ask the Leader of the Government in the Senate what kind of assistance will be provided. Is the government considering providing financial assistance, or simply advice? This information may already be in the public domain, but if it is I have not seen it.

Will these panels give advice only, or will they have some financial resources so that they can assist deserving cases?

Hon. Duff Roblin (Leader of the Government): I cannot answer the question at the present time because it depends on the content of the legislation. The legislation will be tabled shortly, and my friend's questions will be covered in that respect.

Senator Argue: I would think that that question could be answered now. I would think that that is something that has already been discussed.

Can the leader give us any idea whether or not these panels will have any power? He has not been able to say whether they will have any money, so will they just have moral or persuasive powers? Will there be any power given to these panels at all?

I ask this because the situation is very serious. The banks are on a crusade to foreclose on many, many farms. They are forcing farmers into bankruptcy. The banks are taking an

unconscionable attitude, and I hope that these panels will be given some authority.

Will these panels have authority, or will they just have persuasive powers with no clout or legal authority?

Senator Roblin: The actions of those who might be pressing farmers unduly for repayment will be the sort of thing that these panels will deal with.

As to their composition, their powers, their authority, and their functions in more detail, for that information we must wait for the tabling of the legislation.

Senator Argue: The leader has said that they will have some authority, so perhaps they can persuade banks to withdraw their foreclosure actions, or perhaps they will be able to slow the banks down. I do not have much faith in that kind of power because the banks are on a campaign to take over farms; there is just no doubt about that. The provincial authorities in my province have given no power to the review boards; they merely bring them in and talk to them. My experience is that, in fact, the end result of their being there is, at times, to facilitate foreclosures and not to slow them down.

● (1420)

In any event, can the Leader of the Government tell us when we may expect legislation; before the sugar-beet announcement or after; or is it going to be fairly soon?

Senator Roblin: I want to tell my honourable friend that this new body will not be designed to facilitate foreclosures by the banks. That is, of course, an opinion which I think is completely unfounded, and I do not give it any credence whatsoever.

As to the timing of the legislation, when I am able to give my honourable friend a statement on that, I will do so.

Senator Argue: Is the minister saying that there is no credence to my statement regarding Saskatchewan?

Senator Roblin: No, I did not say that.

Senator Argue: I was not referring to this proposed board. I was asking whether or not it was going to be in that position. If the minister says that it will not be doing that, I accept his opinion and I am pleased with that, but, from what I have seen of the operation in Saskatchewan, we need a federal board with some authority because there is no body that exercises any authority in Saskatchewan to slow down the banks.

Senator Roblin: My honourable friend will have to wait until I am able to show him the legislation and, if he finds it defective, then I am sure I will hear from him.

SUPPLY AND SERVICES

POLL—AWARDING OF CONTRACT

Hon. Keith Davey: Honourable senators, I think the Leader of the Government in the Senate will agree that I am a very reasonable and patient man.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh, yes; hear, hear.

Senator Frith: At least.