

[English]

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

FARM CREDIT ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING LOANS AND POWERS AND CAPITAL OF CORPORATION

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Olson that Bill C-5, to amend the Farm Credit Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, the amendment thereto of Mr. Korchinski (p. 1872) and the amendment to the amendment of Mr. Knight (p. 1903).

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on Bill C-5 and also to give my support to the amendment moved by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski). I should also like to state that I oppose the subamendment moved by the hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Knight). So now everything is on the record and we know where we stand.

I suppose the legislation could be supported in principle to a limited extent in that it increases the amount of a loan that may be made, to a farmer to \$100,000 from \$40,000. It is time the amount was increased because a good many farmers in Canada are expanding their farming units. Some have sons, relatives or partners establishing farming enterprises and they need capital in order to make their farm units viable. So I think this provision in the legislation is at least a step in the right direction. As farm units become larger—they seem to be becoming larger, and by legitimate means—the need for good, sound agricultural credit will play a vital part in coming years.

The minister alluded to the fact that this bill was but a small part of what is called the small farms program. I would be a little sceptical about that statement. I believe the bill can be viewed separately from the small farms program. Whether the legislation is good or bad, I think the small farms program has been put before the Canadian public in such a manner that it will have a very rough and rugged journey for a good while. People in agriculture are becoming increasingly suspicious of government involvement in agriculture, as we have stressed over and over again in this House, especially when the government puts forward a proposed plan in which the farming community is not involved in any way, shape or form.

It is of interest to note that about the only small farm legislation we have is the proposed Saskatchewan land bank. I have before me an article which appeared in the *Free Press Weekly*, on the proposed land bank. I suppose from one point of view the Saskatchewan government should be given credit for at least putting forward their proposal and letting the farmers decide whether they approved of it. The land bank proposal is known as Bill 110. According to the Saskatchewan minister of agriculture, Jack Messer, it is proposed to establish a Saskatche-

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wan land bank commission. The article to which I have referred is dated May 6 last and is quite critical of this proposed program. I should like to put a few excerpts on the record, but first may I say that I hope the federal plan is nothing along the lines of the Saskatchewan plan. The article reads in part:

On April 24, Roy Atkinson—

He is president of the National Farmers Union.

—expressed misgivings about the legislation. He said in part, "I think the government has lost sight of the fact farmers have a desperate income problem," and in a complete farm policy package, an adequate land bank program would be one element—

Mr. Messer said flatly he looked on the program as a revival of the Regina manifesto of 1933. And he said he was satisfied the present Saskatchewan government wants to socialize Saskatchewan farms.

As I said before, I hope the federal program does not go that far. The article continues:

In fact, farmer opposition to the Messer plan is remarkably widespread and farmers who oppose the land bank proposals are from all political parties.

Mr. Atkinson was then quoted in the article as saying:

• (2010)

One of Mr. Atkinson's pertinent comments was "few of the things a farmer needs to know are yet in sight in the bill except a long list of all the ways he can be evicted, fined or imprisoned if he doesn't keep up his rental payments." Strong words.

In addition the land bank commission would farm land acquired by it from farmers. The Saskatchewan government in competition with Saskatchewan farmers on the land itself.

At least in that case the land bank program, or what has been alluded to as part of the small farm program, will work in that way and this is perhaps the course that the agricultural industry will take. As a member for Manitoba, which is just a stone's-throw from Saskatchewan, I hope we have the foresight in our province to stay away from any kind of program such as this.

An hon. Member: Cast no stones.

Mr. Murta: Hon. members to my left are making quite a fuss, but I do not believe they are making half the fuss the farmers of Saskatchewan will make when they feel the consequences of the legislation being brought down by the Saskatchewan government.

Whether or not we are talking about a small farms program or amendments to the Farm Credit Act, the real question which should occupy the minds of everyone in this House is not whether this is a step in the right direction—because this is only a small part of the whole agricultural situation—but, rather, what is the government doing in respect of a form of crop insurance and, perhaps more important, about some form of price insurance. Those are the questions being asked by the farmers of Canada. The critical question involves crop insurance to give some kind of stability, and price insurance to give some realistic form to the income of farmers.

I suppose we should look at our total economy when we talk about some form of price insurance or some form of realistic prices for Canadian agricultural products. We have what I like to consider as two sectors to our total economy, one being the private sector and the other that