

Oral Questions

Toronto this past Tuesday between the provincial Ministers of Agriculture, and the reason it took place this past Tuesday is that not all of them could be there next week, I am told, because some of them are going on vacation.

The presentation that was made is not dissimilar to what I made to them in 1978. You say there was not leadership given, but in 1978 I offered them practically the same thing that they are suggesting now. I have been patient in waiting for them to come around. I do not know how far they are going to go. For instance, they did not say that they were going to accept the Quebec plan which would cost \$450 million, or they did not say that they were going to accept the Saskatchewan plan which has a \$30 million deficit, or they did not say that they were going to accept the Alberta plan on which they have spent over \$140 million in the last year.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan: They did not say what plan they were going to accept. They did not say whether they were going to have equity in the plan, or anything else. That is the kind of plan it has to be, as far as I am concerned, and that is what I proposed in 1978. If they had followed my plan in 1978—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan:—there would not be any bankruptcies now, as there are.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. G. M. Gurbin (Bruce-Grey): Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Agriculture will know, or should know, that the situation in 1978 was much different from the situation now, and the GM100 plan that was proposed then would not accommodate the difficulties that are present now.

The Minister of Agriculture has been conning agriculture for the last two years at least, and he has been telling farmers to wait for his plan. I would like to ask him if he really does have a plan and, if so, when it will be made public? Or is he leading the Ministers of Agriculture of the Provinces on so that he can act in a unilateral fashion? Meanwhile, farms are dying and there are bankruptcies at the rate of one a day, while he is doing nothing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member refuses to recognize reality in what I had proposed in 1978, and had Government approval for, and which his Government withdrew in 1979 because it said that my plan was too rich. His Government withdrew that when they were in power in 1979. The Hon. Member said I was fronting. I was not fronting, and I had Government approval of that plan. The provincial Ministers said they were going to come forward with a plan.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan: Where in Heaven's name is their plan, Madam Speaker? If they had a plan, where is it? Why did they not get together and present me with a plan?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan: They presented nothing as far as I am concerned. All they did was present an old thing that I had proposed before. Madam Speaker, I have a 1983 model right now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS FACING BANKRUPTCY

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops-Shuswap): Madam Speaker, what I have to say does not have anything to do with filet mignon and vichyssoise but has a great deal to do with meat and potatoes. I too want to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: No, no!

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not know if anyone understands what is going on in the House, but the Chair certainly does not.

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, the Minister will know that the Royal Bank of Canada recently announced its new policy of feudalism for farmers who were unable to make their payments in the past year as a result of punitive interest rates. He will also be well aware that last year there were record farm bankruptcies with a total liability of approximately \$90 million. The Minister will also know that his Government helped to bail out and renegotiate loans to its friends, \$200 million to Chrysler, \$500 million to Dome, \$125 million to Massey Ferguson, \$125 million to Consolidated Computers, and on and on, to the tune of about \$3 billion. Will the Minister of Agriculture explain why his Government will not spend one-thirtieth of what it spent on bailing out these major corporations, to enable farmers to stay on their own land and own their own farms?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member uses figures pretty loosely. I would ask him to check the record. In the fiscal year 1982/83 we will have provided nearly \$500 million to farmers interest-free. We will have provided them on special loans, I would think by the first of April, with probably \$140 million at nine and one-quarter per cent interest subsidized. Even the loans that we gave them before, which should amount to probably \$700 million this year, were subsidized at about five points below the average cost of long-term money from any other place.

I ask the Hon. Member to check some of the things that are going on. For instance, in crop insurance we pay 50 per cent of the premium. In Saskatchewan what we put into the Crop