

*Farm Loans Interest Rebate Act*

the community at large, but here we have millions of dollars outstanding in arrears over the last two years. That is a good indicator of how serious the financial situation is today on the farm front.

Let us look at the number of bankruptcies. I know this topic has been dealt with by other speakers and the media in the past year, but I would be irresponsible in not including these figures in my address this afternoon, if only to remind Hon. Members that the situation has not improved over this past summer and fall. It has continued to deteriorate.

In the first six months of 1982, there were 316 recorded bankruptcies. That does not include forced sales or those who have given up and sold at bargain basement prices, if they could get anything at all for their machinery, cattle or buildings. We are talking about recorded bankruptcies in the first six months of 1982, Canada-wide, which totalled 316. That contrasts with 191 for all of 1981, an increase in 1982 over 1981 of 65 per cent.

In 1980 there were 164 bankruptcies recorded across Canada and 82 in 1979. The percentage increase in 1982 over 1979, three years, of bankruptcies in Canada in the farming community was a whopping 285 per cent. In Ontario alone in 1982 there were 132 bankruptcies as compared with 112 in 1981. I have been using figures and statistics here, but it goes beyond that. We are talking about human beings, families, a way of life. We are talking about rural Canada's hopes and dreams going down the tube, disillusionment and despair, shattered dreams and aspirations. I am not exaggerating. I am talking in terms of hundreds of farms, not a couple of dozen. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture estimates, and I emphasize again, that 20,000 farmers are in dire straits. So in addition to the bankruptcies, we are talking of at least another 20,000 farmers who are finding it difficult to sleep at night and to keep their emotions stable. These farmers are not planning expansion or extensions or modernization. They are not planning to borrow because their line of credit has run out, or their credit rating has virtually disappeared. They are just planning day by day, hoping and praying they can keep their farms, their livestock, their land; just to stay in business, just to remain farmers. That is a lot of people.

● (1810)

Third World countries and developing nations look at Canadians and think we are so well off, so rich, and indeed we are, comparatively speaking. No one would argue that point. But they cannot understand why we are not producing more food, why we have farm bankruptcies, and why thousands of farmers go to bed at night worrying whether next month or in six months' time they are still going to have deed to their land. In a world of hunger they cannot understand why our farmers cannot or will not produce more food. We know they can. We have some of the best farmers in the world in our country, if not the best. All they want is a fair return on their investment and hard work. But for some reason our Government, and other governments in the western world, cannot seem to get their act together. They cannot seem to rationalize agriculture productivity to the point where we could specialize to an even greater degree so as to produce at a unit cost that would be

competitive in world markets. This would bring us a reasonable return on the invested dollar and the invested work in the Canadian farm community. That is another major concern of my Party as well as the concern of farmers across Canada.

When I talk about the farm community, I am not limiting my perspective just to farmers. I represent the federal electoral district of Brant, which is in Southwestern Ontario. Its largest community is the city of Brantford where we have Massey-Ferguson's North American combine operation and White Farm Equipment, both of which are recipients of Government aid at this time and neither of which is operating. They are flat out. They do not even have half a shift. No one goes into work except a few maintenance people. When farm times are good, my city is booming. I do not want to sound selfish; it is true as well in other communities across Canada. But this city, with a population of 75,000, with a work force of 48,000, now has 13,700 persons drawing unemployment insurance, nearly 5,000 of whom, two years ago, were working either for Massey-Ferguson or for White Farm Equipment.

Chatham is another city which is very badly hit, along with Hamilton. When you have 25 per cent unemployment, and almost half of that is from the farm implement sector, in one community of 75,000, then it is little wonder that the depression, the pall that hangs over my home town of Brantford, can almost be felt and tasted when I visit there on weekends. The two shopping malls are almost deserted. The main street is deserted at high noon on a Saturday. People who have money are not spending it, and the vast majority of those unemployed in my city have no money to spend, and I fear this winter a third of them will see their unemployment insurance run out and from there they will go to welfare.

**An Hon. Member:** Did you say a third?

**Mr. Blackburn:** Down about a third. I cannot get the figures. I tried to get them from the local unemployment insurance office, the regional office, and here in Ottawa, but no one will give me an estimate of how many will be running out of unemployment insurance benefits this winter. The estimate, at City Hall in Brantford, is approximately a third. So we are talking about 4,000 people who may indeed end up on welfare.

If Massey-Ferguson or White Farm were operating at full speed, which they would if the farm community were in a healthy, buoyant financial position, this would not be happening. The inter-relationship between rural Canada and urban Canada is graphically brought home to all of us when we visit a city such as Brantford. That is why, when I take a look at Bill C-134, Mr. Speaker, I wonder just what ripple or trickle down effect the \$200 million will have on the 500 farmers coast to coast out of the 20,000 who need financial assistance. I wonder what effect that will have on communities such as Brantford, Chatham or Hamilton. It could be any of your prairie towns that are dependent on farm incomes, not necessarily towns that manufacture farm implements, except