

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

can be done to bring this about. First of all, we could put much more federal money into agriculture and support the prices of farm commodities. We could take a similar step to the measures taken by the Saskatchewan government and establish a land bank whereby the government would purchase land from older farmers who wished to sell, in turn leasing or selling the land to younger people who want to start farming or to small farmers who need another half section or quarter section in order to have a viable farm unit. This is something one province is trying to do by itself, and with co-operation from Ottawa it could go much further.

All farm organizations were very disappointed at the budget brought down in this House a few days ago, because it handed out concessions to the manufacturing companies but had nothing for the farmers. In my view the farmers are the prime producers in this country and are among the best consumers we have. If we put more money into agriculture it would stimulate the entire economy. This matter concerns me because in my constituency I have hundreds and hundreds of small farmers, many with their backs up against the wall, totally disillusioned with this government and its policies. It is these people who are demanding explanations, and it is the children of these people about whom I am concerned because they are being forced off the land and into circumstances of poverty.

**Mr. Allen B. Sulatycky (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has quite correctly stated that according to the census the number of farmers has declined by 15 per cent. However, he neglected to mention that the land area devoted to agriculture has remained essentially constant. It should also be noted that the annual decline in the number of farms has been about the same for the past 30 years, so this is something that has not just developed.

I am not sure that this general trend can be stopped, although as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) previously mentioned the significant increase in farm income will no doubt have some effect in this regard. The government anticipated this trend some time ago and recognized that as this adjustment and change was occurring there were some hardships being placed upon the people involved, the hard working rural people who have been the backbone of this country since its beginning.

To help overcome some of these problems, this government introduced its small farm development policy and has placed a great deal of emphasis on it. This is the policy which does some of the things the hon. member suggests we should be doing. It is a program designed to make it easier for these individuals who want to stay in agriculture and expand or adjust their operations by providing special credit facilities, and make it easier for those who decide to retire from agriculture or try their hand at another occupation by providing, among other things, grants in addition to the resale value of their property. Officials of the Department of Agriculture are working diligently with their provincial colleagues to arrive at the necessary federal-provincial agreement which will make it possible to put this program into effect.

As the hon. member may be aware, more emphasis is now being placed on the marketing aspect of agriculture which, it is anticipated, will improve the income position of farmers and thus encourage those contemplating leaving agriculture solely on the basis of income, to stay. The age of our farmers has a lot to do with the number of farms disposed of each year and the government is meeting this problem head-on by changes in the Farm Credit Act currently being considered in committee which would, among other things, make it possible for 18-year olds to obtain loans. Time does not permit me to go into the many other programs designed by the government to assist the family farm.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.