

I have some doubts about this, according to statistics. However, I would not give too much importance to this statement because, to be fair, one has to look fully into the situation and check whether such a statement is true or not or whether it is an actual fact.

I quote further:

—labour is being replaced in many cases by capital and the purchasing power of the dollar has decreased a little during recent years—

That merely confirms what I said a while ago, that the cost of production has increased alarmingly and that even though prices may have increased in the dairy industry, they have not done so at the same rate as production costs; this explains why many farmers cannot expand normally to achieve the level of production that would correspond to the equipment they must acquire to make up for the lack of farm labour.

We noticed that in many parts of the country when we visited it. We asked the farmers this "Why do you have so much equipment on your farm?" The answer was always the same "We cannot get enough help and must therefore use the most modern equipment to do the work at the right time of the season.

That is how farmers all across Canada ran into debt and why many of them had to give up farming because they were not getting the income needed to meet their commitments.

In another part of his speech, the hon. Minister of Agriculture said, and I quote:

The principle of relating loan ceilings to the number of farm operators rather than to the size of the business has proven in practice to be inequitable for individual farmers employing hired labour or people other than those with an equity in the farm unit. The principle has also proved inequitable, I suggest, in situations where the farmer operating his farm is assisted by sons or daughters of minor age, compared to two or more owner operators in a farming operation or a form of partnership. We want to correct that situation.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with this statement and if we can really reach the goal mentioned in the statement I just read, I believe we really will have been most helpful to many farmers throughout Canada.

At any rate, I should like to say in concluding that as recently as this afternoon the Minister of Agriculture in his answer to a question stated that a small farm policy had been established for buying back and ensuring the maintenance of small farms.

Since we are often asked questions on this matter, I should like to know the full particulars of such a policy. I support the member who asked the question because it is very important for a member representing a rural constituency to be able to provide the required information that will help people find a solution to their problems as quickly as possible.

Thus the need to preserve the family farm, or the small enterprise is being recognized and even if it is not always possible to come to an agreement with departments of other governments, something will indeed have to be done. I do not like idleness. Give me action and give me progress.

Farm Credit Act

Today, Wednesday, May 3, there is a news item in the newspaper *Le Devoir* which somehow amazes me and I quote:

Farming in Quebec is ill mainly on account of conflicts between Ottawa and Quebec

Indeed, there have been quite a number of those conflicts between Ottawa and Quebec!

An hon. Member:—those damned conflicts—

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): I nearly said it myself—those conflicts have always been fought at the expense of the taxpayers, of the small farmers, of the small businesses.

I wish we would meet the challenge and stop creating fake conflicts. Instead, we should earnestly try and sit around a table and ask ourselves whether it is possible to initiate projects that could strengthen our agricultural industry in Quebec, in Ontario and indeed, in all the provinces and thereby bring happiness and prosperity to the farming community.

There is an excerpt from the article I started quoting and which cannot fail to disturb me:

The authors of this white paper, on the other hand, point out that almost 25,008 of the 70,000 Quebec farmers, that is 36 per cent, get permanent or temporary assistance from the Department of Social Affairs.

That is not very encouraging, and is evidence of a situation of which we cannot be proud.

I think that if we want to act positively, we must adopt legislation allowing those small enterprises to be self-sufficient. We must stop, at last, taxing citizens who are working day and night to accommodate some of our people who would rather remain idle and unproductive.

Those citizens will not accept it. They are proud people who rightfully expect their work to bring them the income they need to live decently, without having to rely on others.

• (1720)

Mr. Speaker, I think that the time has come for the government to establish a workable policy likely to assure the farming population of that which everybody wishes them for that matter, specifically, the possibility of living decently in Canada.

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, as the House continues to study Bill C-5, to amend the Farm Credit Act, I am pleased to rise to take part in the debate with the hon. members who have already stated their views.

First of all, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) for a fine speech. Actually, I find myself in agreement with many of the views he expressed during the few minutes his speech lasted.

Since he referred to a matter of very great concern to me, specifically, the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture for the province of Quebec, Mr. Toupin, I should like to say to this hon. minister that a lot remains for him to do in his province and that, for instance, he should see to it that his credits—some \$84 million—are