

*Government Orders*

tions on how the Farm Credit Corporation Act could and should be improved.

After having heard those suggestions and witnesses then the work could have been done in drafting the bill. However, as we know very well, that is not the way it happens. That is not the way it happened with this bill.

The minister brought the bill in, the bill was basically cut and dried. Yes, there was one clause at committee that the government agreed to withdraw. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture mentioned it today when he stated that it had been withdrawn. I might say that was done for legal reasons, so the government had very little choice.

Those amendments that we put forward at the legislative committee after the bill received second reading should have been discussed in the way that they could and should have been by the government members, rather than voting down every amendment that the opposition brought forward. They knew from the start that basically we were in favour of the bill.

It is a good piece of legislation but it could be better yet. This is where so often in this House we fall down in our obligation to our constituents and to Canadians.

Of the two amendments that were put forward today, one was passed. Two others were put forward today. I do not think we are asking too much. I do not know whether it was out of stubbornness or what, but the government simply would not pass them. That is all there is to it.

That is asking for an appeal board so that if someone is not happy with the decision or how they are dealt with when they make an application to the Farm Credit Corporation they have one, two or three individuals that they can discuss that with. I do not know what more anybody can ask than that.

As I said earlier today, it was not going to cost much but it would serve a useful purpose. Since this board of directors will be dealing with and making rules and regulations and policy respecting family farms and small and medium sized businesses, primarily in rural Canada, there were amendments before this House today suggesting that the legislation state that a percentage of the board of directors be primary producers.

Whether that be 50 per cent, 40 per cent or 30 per cent I suppose does not matter. There is nothing in this

legislation today that says that any of that board of directors has to be primary producers. They in all fairness would have a better understanding of what happens, what is going on and what people down on the farm are faced with today. The instruments and tools of financing would be very valuable and very useful to them.

• (1615)

In closing, there are a couple of other concerns that I have. A number of us have received a copy of a letter from the Canadian Bankers Association which states that it is not happy with this legislation. I may not be using its words but using my words. It says that this may allow the Farm Credit Corporation to intrude on the banks' territory. That does not bother me much. If that is what it takes to keep the banking institutions' feet to the fire, fine and dandy, it will keep their feet to the fire.

Some of the banks have said that if this happens they will consider closing some of the rural banks. I do not think so. The Farm Credit Corporation fills the gap of long-term financing. The banks are needed there for operating loans and for shorter term financing and they will still be there.

Again, if this is what it takes to get the banks' attention then I think that is another good part of the bill. However, with the track record that this government has in privatizing things, I also see where this government could very well be setting up the Farm Credit Corporation to be privatized, sold off, or whatever way we want to say it, to another lending institution. We must be very, very careful and very cautious that that not happen because it does serve, for the reasons I have just stated, a very useful purpose. It has a useful bit of clout in the agri-food industry.

It is a good piece of legislation. I am pleased that it is passing today and I am pleased to support it. In that light I remind Canadians that we in the opposition are often accused of only voting against the government. This is an indication where parties can work together in this House for the good of an industry, for the good of a segment of Canada, but I remind everyone that it could work even better yet.

As I say, this is a good piece of legislation and it deserves passing, but it is too bad it could not have done the whole job and been fixed the best way that it possibly