

*Canadian Farm Loan Act*

constituency which I have the honour to represent. I might say, Mr. Chairman, that I think you are also acquainted with the conditions of which I am speaking this evening. While you remain silent, I am sure that at heart you will be sympathetic with what I have to say.

In the West Kootenay district we have at the present time between 14,000 and 15,000 acres of undeveloped agricultural land which up until recent years could be reached only by steamer, primitive roads and trails. But as a result of road development within the last five or six years, large areas of this land are becoming accessible. Schools are being built and the sick can be taken to hospital. Several times during the last 50 years much of this land was considered for agricultural development, but it was not developed because of the lack of access to schools, hospitals and communications generally.

Now I am confident, Mr. Chairman, that if the board had their administration decentralized, if they had a branch office in the southern interior and one in the northern interior, the officials would get a better appreciation and understanding of the opportunities that exist for sound agricultural development under pioneer conditions. Now, to demonstrate the opportunities for development which exist as a result of the availability of long-term low interest agricultural credit, I want to quote briefly from the *Nelson Daily News*. Here is a large heading across it, "West Kootenay Fills Only 16 per cent of Own Food Needs." The article says:

West Kootenay in 1951 required food valued at \$5,293,888 in order to satisfy the appetites of its population of 54,737 persons. A little better than 30 per cent of this value was made up of goods brought into the area and 16 per cent was of local origin.

These facts are brought out in a report on the market for farm products in the 13,000 square-mile area of West Kootenay, written by W. C. Shipley and I. F. Furniss of the federal Department of Agriculture.

We have the land and we have exceptionally good markets, Mr. Chairman. We have the young people who desire to settle on that land. In some cases the young people wish to take over the farms and orchards that their parents have operated for many years, but here are others who are willing to go on the virgin land that is available.

I suggest also that under certain circumstances the regulations are too rigid. I read in the 1954 report of the Canadian farm loan board, page 16, this one paragraph which is marked, "Who may qualify?"

Any person whose principal occupation is farming and who owns or proposes to purchase a farm and who is actually engaged in or about to become engaged in farming the land offered as security.

[Mr. Herridge.]

An applicant must satisfy the board that he has the necessary experience and ability to successfully operate the farm and repay the loan.

I want to bring to the attention of the house the reason I maintain that at the present time—I am not blaming the officials for this—the regulations apparently are too rigid. There is in my constituency a very experienced and successful farmer who farms 390 acres. Now, that is a very large farm in the riding which I have the honour to represent. He has 100 acres of that land in hay and the balance in pasture and a small area in grain. He gets well over 100 tons of hay a year and has an excellent herd of good beef cattle. This very successful farmer made an application to the board for a relatively small loan, and his application was rejected. They admitted he was an experienced, successful farmer, but it was rejected on the ground that his house was not on the land on which he wished to raise the loan.

The circumstances are these. This is a cattle farm at an elevation of about 3,000 feet; it is in a mountain valley near Slocan city. I am sure the member for Vancouver-Quadra knows the area about which I am speaking. It is west of Slocan city and it has been farmed for years. There is a very rough mountain road to get there and he cannot live on this land because of getting his children to school. He has to have his milk herd on land closer to Slocan city which is, incidentally, the smallest city in North America. I believe it has a population of something over 375 persons. He has to live on the lower levels in order to get his children to school and deliver his farm products to the city and surrounding district. His application was rejected strictly on the ground that he was not living on the land he was farming. I bring that to the attention of the house because I think it illustrates in some respects that the regulations are too rigid.

Then, as I said before, there is a tendency, and I think it springs from the regulations, to underestimate the possibilities for successful farm development under pioneer conditions. I am quite sure that some of those gentlemen who come from the coast do not believe this heavily wooded area looks like a good investment when compared to some of the land in the Fraser valley or the coastal regions of British Columbia. However, they underestimate, in some cases, the productivity of the soil. They possibly do not realize the excellent markets that are available within a range of 50 miles. They underestimate the calibre of some of these young people particularly who are anxious to settle on the land.

My further criticism would be that the interest rate is too high. At the moment the