

*Government Orders*

I would like to say from the start that for the most part the bill before us will be beneficial or has the potential of being beneficial to the agricultural community. However it is very important that the amendment before us gets passed. I am not so sure about the amendment to the amendment, but I am about the original amendment and its intent.

With the changes this bill makes to the board of directors of the Farm Credit Corporation we suffer the possibility of a lack of direct connection with the industry and the direction in which the Canadian agricultural industry and the government may want the Farm Credit Corporation to go.

This amendment states very clearly that the purpose of the corporation is to enhance rural Canada by providing specific and personalized financial services to farming operations including family farms and to those businesses in rural Canada including small or medium sized businesses, et cetera. It gives definite direction.

As has been stated before many times, 97 per cent of Canadian farms are family owned and operated. The danger we have if we do not give more specific direction to the Farm Credit Corporation is that we could very easily fall into a situation that is so evident in the actions and sometimes unspoken word of the present government. The definite direction is that the emphasis falls on the bigger companies and its support falls to the bigger companies. I do not think that is the intention of the farm credit legislation but there is that danger.

We know that over 80 per cent of jobs in Canada in the last number of years have been created by small businesses and medium sized businesses including farms. We need to state that emphasis.

If ever there was a time when rural Canada needed some development in the short term so that it could continue to be strong in the long term, now is that time. Now is also the time when agencies such as the Farm Credit Corporation should be there to support structures and facilities within rural Canada, whether they be farmer owned, local owned, co-ops, or a group of farmers or local business people going together to establish a facility for value added products. Now is the time.

We can give specific direction to the Farm Credit Corporation that this is the area we want it to concentrate on. We can make that message very clear. Whether

it is Farm Credit Corporation or whatever it is, we do not any longer have an unlimited supply of funds. We must make sure those funds are prioritized in the proper way and properly directed and that the emphasis of that expenditure is put there.

In order to have a strong agrifood industry I hope there is no question in anyone's mind that we must have strong, economically viable family farm units because that is the backbone of the industry.

However with the difficulty today of getting more money out of the world price for those raw products, a direction I find refreshing coming from the rural community is that those primary producers are realizing they have to get involved at some of the next stages with what happens to their natural resources or raw products. That realization is there. That support therefore must come from government in order to help them to attain that and it must come from the Farm Credit Corporation in order to help them put those instruments of value adding in place. If we cannot get any more from the world price, let us say for grain, probably one of the ways to go is to develop that into ethanol or in the case of canola, for example, there is some great work being done now to make diesel fuel using canola oil as a base.

• (1055)

This is where rural development can take place in order to allow rural communities to get more money out of the final marketplace and in order for this development to stay in those communities. By doing so, we will create jobs, we will keep our communities together, we will keep that social fabric and fibre together throughout rural Canada and we will have a better blend of rural and urban people.

We know that in many rural areas now there is not that distinct line between a farm community and an urban community. We are getting a mixture of the two in what we refer to as a rural-urban community. They need to and they can get along together, but there has to be interests and gains there for both.

I hope that the government will see fit to accept this amendment so that it makes it very clear to rural Canada, to rural-urban Canada and to the Farm Credit Corporation the direction in which we feel their expenditures should concentrate. It certainly does not prohibit the other, but it makes it clear that this is really where we want the effort to be made.