

Rural Development

Mr. Speaker, before concluding my remarks, I should simply like to point out the great urgency of giving every consideration to the problems of rural life. The farmer is now squeezed between a high cost of living and the cost price, while the sales price of his products has remained almost unchanged in the last few years. The cost of living is rising continually and the farmer is forced to make one loan after another to meet his obligations.

This is not a normal state of affairs and, sooner or later, unless the necessary remedies are found, the farmer will tire and make demonstrations as he has done in the past. We should remember the march on Quebec last year or the year before and the blocking of roads by the farmers in order to understand what this usually peaceful class can do when it decides to take matters into its own hands.

Study groups are springing up everywhere. The Catholic Farmers Union is on the alert. The farmers are ready to follow their leaders and to expose their views whenever it is deemed proper and advisable.

Unless the federal government assumes its responsibilities and creates conditions which will allow the farmers to continue feeding the nation, we will have to ask ourselves whether we have really done what we should. Our duty is to conceive legislation which is general in scope and which will give the farmer his due, that is a fair share of the national revenue.

• (4:20 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, having spoken at great length on the resolution preceding the bill I simply rise now to express my support for the spirit, principle and purposes of the bill which is actually, shall I say, another brick in the foundation laid by the former government and in particular by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Hamilton) when he introduced the ARDA legislation whose principles are found in this bill. A lot of experience has been gained since that time.

The debate on this bill has been a demonstration of democracy in action. The bill was introduced by a forward looking cabinet minister who has ideas. It has been supported by a Progressive Conservative member who is the scion of a very famous manufacturing family. I refer to the hon. member for Northumberland (Mr. Hees). It has been wholeheartedly backed by a backwoods socialist rancher, the hon. member for Kootenay West.

I am very pleased to see the unanimity of agreement on the principle behind this bill which has received the support of those who live in near-castles and of one who is content to end his days in a log cabin. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, it has received wide support in this house.

I rise to say briefly that I support this measure first of all because it reflects as is felt on all sides of the house, an appreciation of rural life and its value to Canadian society. I am quite sure that many who have spoken on the bill have spoken from a background of experience sometimes gained in early youth.

Let me say that I support the bill, first, because within its scope it will assure a continually adequate supply of efficiently produced food and fibre to meet our national requirements and our responsibilities to less fortunate people.

Second, it aims to foster conditions which will promote living standards for farmers and rural people comparable with those of workers in other occupations. I point out that the concept of the bill is somewhat more expanded than the original ARDA concept. The bill, as I understand it, will provide for the establishment of rural communities, an increase in small industries and operations of this type.

Third, as I read the bill it will assist in the maintenance of the economic farm unit and the continuance of healthy and productive rural communities which historically have provided a healthy, human injection into urban life.

Fourth, I support the measure because it will assure the conservation and wise management of our basic soil, forest and water resources, within its limited field of action.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that we all freely admit that this is experimental legislation which will require determined application by the government, the co-operation of the provincial governments, and the participation of large numbers of Canadians through the various organizations that they support. While this bill provides for an expenditure of only \$50 million, this figure can be quickly increased when the work undertaken under this legislation proves itself successful, proves its popularity and is endorsed by the people it is intended to serve.

I think I said that the bill provides for experimental legislation. I am rather conservative in many respects, you know, Mr.