

Farm Loans Interest Rebate Act

of being rejected and having no hope of getting back into the work force. The Government seems to be immune to their cries for action and their pleas for help at a time when it has become abundantly clear it is so desperately needed.

The unemployment situation is creating a wave of fear and terror among Canadians, creating more and more stress within the family unit, resulting in increased separations. Wife and child battering are becoming more acute, and every day more and more children are being abandoned to the Children's Aid Society, a devastating social reaction brought about by the hard times plaguing this nation.

The people of Leeds-Grenville elected me to speak out on their behalf. They want me to speak not only for the farmers but also for each and every one of the 80,000 people living in my constituency. They want me to send their message to the Prime Minister and to Hon. Members sitting on the other side of the House. They elected me to tell this Government that they are fed up and disgusted with the way this country is being run. They are disgusted with a bureaucracy that wastes \$16 million of their hard-earned tax dollars through sheer mismanagement and extravagance. They are disgusted with a Government that has overspent so much in times of prosperity that it now cannot help those who need it in times of despair.

● (1750)

Canada is a country with a wealth of natural resources available to her. Therefore, how can she be motivated to utilize her vast resources to increase productivity which, in turn, would lead to greater wealth for our country? We were once looked upon by the rest of the world as a nation that was really going somewhere, a nation with vast potential, the Promised Land. But look at us today. Under the economic mismanagement of the present Government, our reputation as to our ability to produce wealth has sunk to its lowest ebb.

In closing I should like to say that I believe we have one of the greatest resources available to us, that is, human beings. Yet this Government is stifling the natural incentives and initiatives of individuals who want to be productive and responsible Canadians with a future to look forward to.

Canada needs direction, she needs leadership and she needs a goal. Under our present Government, Mr. Speaker, we have none of these.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): That was a first-class maiden speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my address on Bill C-134, on behalf of my party I would like to extend congratulations to the Hon. Member for Leeds-Grenville (Mrs. Cossitt) for her very fine victory last month in the byelection and for her very fine maiden speech in this House of Commons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Blackburn: I know that I speak for all Members on both sides of the House when I say that we look forward to hearing from her on many occasions between now and the next election. However, beyond the next election I will not go at this moment.

Bill C-134 is a very crucial bill in some respects. In other respects, unfortunately, it falls far short of what I think is the main problem of the Canadian farm community today. On the one hand, this Bill will free more funds to help some farmers who presently find themselves in dire straits. To a limited degree, that is commendable. But when one considers that, at the most, this added funding through Bill C-134, at an average loan of \$50,000, will assist perhaps a total of 500 farmers, and when in fact the Canadian Federation of Agriculture very accurately estimates that 10 per cent of our farming community is in dire straits, this means that 20,000 farmers, need immediate financial aid or assistance just to keep their heads above water, to say nothing of expanding or modernizing their already existing facilities.

Members on this side of the House, and some Members on the Liberal side, have for the past two years called for added financial assistance to the farming community. I am not a farmer myself, though my constituency comprises some of the finest farms and farmland in southwestern Ontario. I have spoken on many occasions on behalf of the farmers in my riding. While the cynics might say the reason I do this now and then is simply to try to get some votes in a rural area, I would like to think that the only reason I speak on farm problems is that agriculture, whether in Brant, in Saskatchewan, in eastern Ontario, in the Maritimes or in British Columbia, is fundamentally our most important industry. Perhaps we can say that forestry and farming are the two most important basic industries in the country.

If the farm community and the farm industry are in trouble anywhere in our country, and at the present time they are in trouble all over the country, then the entire economy is adversely affected and people from coast to coast are adversely affected. That is why bills such as Bill C-134 are very important. Bill C-134 does not go far enough, and for many hundreds of farmers it comes too late.

Let me quote from a letter which the Canadian Federation of Agriculture sent to the NDP farm critic just last week. It is dated October 26, and reads, in part:

—the grains, oilseeds and beef industries are in deep distress, and hog producers, while currently receiving improved prices are struggling to survive the effects of depressed prices of the recent past and apprehensive about prices looking to 1983. There is little light on the horizon for these farm sectors.

Coming as it does from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, one can draw only one conclusion from that letter. There is no rhetoric in it; it is stating facts. If anyone in this country should know the facts, it is the Canadian Federation of Agriculture because the real nub of the problem is right there in that short extract.

Farmers, like many other businessmen in this country, are caught in the cost-price squeeze. I can remember making speeches similar to this one using that expression ten years