

*Farm Improvement Loans Act*

Our farm families have certainly showed their good will in the past. Today, some very well equipped farms produce much more than they could just a few years ago. Perhaps it is due to automation, but certainly to the good will and courage of Canadian farmers at large.

Tremendous courage was needed to clear that land for cultivation, land which is not too old as far as agriculture is concerned but which was practically turned into a farm kingdom.

Now, it is up to the government to legislate in such a way as to permit those farmers to live decently, particularly if one considers that the farmer is the most important of our citizens since he is producing food for the nation.

Today we want to help the family farm and that is why I am in favour of the proposed increase in farm improvement loans. It will permit families settled on Canadian farms to expand and improve their farm techniques in order to increase and improve their production in order to meet the needs of the Canadian people generally.

Now, this is good for agriculture in general or the rural economy itself.

As I said a moment ago, it is the very basis of the national economy, in this country as in other countries. Without agriculture, I think that it would be extremely difficult to survive.

Now, it is not sufficient to grant loans. I think that we should take our bearings and look in the direction of production and loans granted to farmers. It is obvious that if the farmer cannot obtain enough for his products, he will continue to need larger loans. And the fact that he is borrowing is not necessarily a good thing. If he applies for a loan, it is because his support price or the price he gets for his products is not high enough. The loan is therefore a bad thing, because it merely delays his bankruptcy.

In the present case, certain areas could even be designated where a loan would actually hinder the farmer's development. In the circumstances, it is up to us to look into the situation, to seek advice and to act accordingly, so as to maintain the price of his products high enough to enable the farmer to live on the income of his farm.

All farmers are taking jobs today, and I am not only speaking about the province of Quebec, but also of western farm lands—where the best farms in the country are to be found. There are people who work in a locality and, at a given time, they leave to

go to work in Regina; others have to go to work in Edmonton, because their farm is not too remote from the city, in order to make both ends meet at the end of the year.

This happens in the west, and it also happens in the province of Quebec. Nowadays, it is no longer the farm that supports the farmer; in many cases it is rather the farmer who has to support the farm. It is not at all the same thing. That is why it is necessary that an extensive study be made in connection with the sale and cost prices of agricultural products. It is useless to make loans easier for farmers if the prices quoted are not high enough. As I said a moment ago, the only result is to postpone bankruptcy. But at the present time, regardless of the views other members might put forward, I am convinced that the prices the farmers get in some agricultural areas are altogether ridiculous and that it is unthinkable to try to maintain a farm economy with such prices.

Here is an example I should like to give to the house to show what I mean. I would ask the government to consider such cases when they occur, in all farm production areas. I want to refer here to maple products, with which I am familiar because they are produced on a large scale in my own constituency.

Last year the cost of producing a pound of grade one, class A, maple sugar was 27 cents. The maple syrup then went to wholesalers or co-operatives to be placed on the market, etc. I should like to mention that when the organizers of last year's Plessisville maple sugar festival, seeing that they could not obtain enough maple syrup from the farmers because they were sold out, went back to the co-operative, the next day, after the quality test of the maple syrup had been taken, for another supply of maple sugar. They asked for second grade sugar since it makes a better and less crystallizing toffee; they paid 42 cents per pound for second grade sugar while the day before, first grade was selling for 27 cents per pound.

As you can see the farmer does not benefit from the disposal of those commodities. With regard to the price at farm level—though it has been said that maple sugar is expensive, it does cost something, there is the work of the farmer who produces it, the depreciation of his equipment used in the manufacture of maple sugar—we are advised not to put any cattle in the sugar bush, because it disturbs sugar production. Therefore, to what use can the sugar bush be put at times? Land taxes have to be paid, as well as the help, horses have to be obtained on rental and, today,

[Mr. Langlois.]