

Farm Credit Act

There were some new members who, probably in their innocence, told the committee that we have to give more loans to the small farmers. That is exactly what we have been doing. That makes the difference between what we have been doing for the last three years and what was done under the old farm loan board. Mr. Chairman, I do not want to rouse up this committee by referring to all the bitter memories that we have of the thirties and following the war, when the farmers who had done without capital during the war, and used their machinery till they drove it into the ground. They could not make improvements or expand their holdings; and after the war, when everybody else was expanding they were denied credit by the old farm loan board under the previous administration.

This sorry record of refusals, not just refusals temporarily but refusals permanently, can be shown by this chart which is now on the *Hansard* record of the House of Commons. If any hon. member looks at that bar graph he can see how it swung upwards in 1957, till this year we are lending at the rate of \$80 million. It is even off the top of the graph.

Mr. Teillet: Big farmers.

Mr. Hamilton: No, sir.

Mr. Teillet: I can prove it.

Mr. Hamilton: Small farmers.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the minister would permit a question on this point?

Mr. Hamilton: At the end of my remarks, please. This is very important. I am making a point here.

Mr. Argue: It is on this point that I wanted to ask a question.

Mr. Hamilton: I want to make it absolutely clear that if a farmer comes into the Farm Credit Corporation office, and he is a small farmer, whether he is a 12 acre farmer in British Columbia, a 40 acre farmer in Nova Scotia, a 100 acre farmer in Quebec—

Mr. Matheson: What about Leeds?

Mr. Hamilton: —a 180 acre farmer in Leeds—and I have seen them down there—or a 500 acre farmer out in western Canada, these men, in my book, in most cases can be called small farmers. If he is operating at a level of income which is not sufficient to keep his family up to the ordinary amenities of the average man who works in the city or in a factory, I maintain that this man is a small farmer. Do we in this committee, Mr. Chairman, realize that even during the last five years, when we have seen farm incomes in Canada reach record proportions, in four of

[Mr. Hamilton.]

those five years the average farmer in Canada today per farm makes only \$2,400 a year. I ask you. With most farmers having an investment of \$25,000 to \$100,000 on their farms, this \$2,400 does not even pay interest on the investment, yet it is his total income.

Average figures do not tell the full story; the facts do that. But there are many farmers who receive a lot less than \$2,400. This has been my particular fight, if I may say so, to bring to the attention not only of the members of parliament but also to the people of Canada that no minister of agriculture, no government of Canada, can remain complacent and satisfied when there are so many farmers getting less than even that small amount of \$2,400.

Mr. Chairman, this is why in western Canada during the campaign, although I was allowed only a few speeches, I went out on every western platform and told the western farmers that we had had it tough for ten years, but that our ship had come in with better cattle prices, better hog prices, better grain prices, which had raised our income percentagewise by a tremendous amount. We are still not as high as Ontario, but we are coming up to and almost catching them. I told them I had been through the farms of the maritimes, of Quebec, and great areas of Ontario, parts of British Columbia, and parts of the prairies too. I told them that I had seen farmers and their families living at standards that I do not want to see any Canadians living at. I asked the western farmers, and western people generally, in those speeches—and the newspaper records are there to read—to support me in spending most of my time for the next two or three years in putting my efforts as minister into getting into these areas of Canada which needed to be lifted up, and raising their incomes with the same updraft which we had in western Canada with these great sales abroad. Every farm audience in western Canada stopped every speech I made to give me their support in that regard. I mention this to the committee now because through the fortunes of battle I was not able last spring to get, as I had intended, to certain areas of Ontario and Quebec to tell them what the federal government had done and what was available for them. Because I was aware last winter when studying these income figures that certain parts of Canada were not benefiting the same as were other parts.

Mr. Chairman, my point is this. One of the ways of raising incomes and getting at these areas is to try to provide credit in a form which can be used. What is the use of trying to provide credit in the Nova Scotia area, for example, if you base it on the value