

*Canadian Farm Loan Act*

conspired to reduce the percentage of the population which is taking part in farming, nevertheless I think we all recognize the fact that agriculture is doubly important, first of all because of its material contribution—and I shall come back to that matter in a moment—and second, because of the fact that those who live on the land, those who have that steady and steady influence in their lives, form an extremely important part of the population. I think it is undesirable when they shrink to a small percentage. As time goes on I hope there will be offsetting considerations. Of course, we cannot overlook the fact that a great deal of work that was formerly done on the farm is now done in the factory and that one man can now raise the food that it formerly took ten men to raise. Nevertheless I think a measure like this one, which is designed to assist those who are now in farming and, perhaps even more important, to induce other people to take to that profession, is an extremely important measure indeed.

The board has carried on in a sensible way. I think they have won confidence. Their losses have been small. When we are asked to extend their powers, to extend the amount of the loan and to extend the percentage which may be loaned, I think we may feel that we are giving these powers to men who over a period of many years, have shown that they are responsible and that they are entitled to be entrusted with these powers. There are certain questions of detail which one will wish to ask with regard to the administrative changes, changes in capitalization—there are special points with regard to fishermen's loans—and others. But as there will probably be other members of the committee who would like to make some general observations—some of them who are closer to the industry than I am personally—I shall content myself now with saying just what I have said, namely that I feel that this is a matter of great importance; that for nearly 30 years we have had experience with those who are managing it; and that the results are such as to make us wish to continue the powers so that in the future the act may, if possible, serve a more useful purpose than it has served in the past.

**Mr. Herridge:** Mr. Chairman, I have had a lifelong interest in agricultural credit because I am a great believer in agricultural development, particularly at this time in the still pioneer sections of our country. I think experience proves the historic necessity for agricultural credit by means of low-interest, long-term loans if you are going to establish a sound agriculture in any country.

I am particularly interested in this resolution because I notice that there is provision for an increase in the amount of loans, up to a maximum of \$15,000, and that the resolution suggests that loans can be up to 65 per cent of the value of the farm concerned. However, I wish to offer a few suggestions, as a result of experience, and to make a few criticisms.

I quite agree with the hon. member who spoke previously that during the past 30 years the record of the board has been good and that it has served a useful purpose so far as agricultural development in Canada is concerned. Before proceeding further, Mr. Chairman, I must make it clear that I represent a particular breed of farmers who are obliged to work 12 months a year, from 12 to 16 hours a day in order to make a modest living and who are more acquainted with the axe, the crosscut saw and the grub hoe than they are with the rubber-tired tractor or the combine. It is on behalf of that particular group of farmers that I am speaking this evening.

My first criticism and suggestion with respect to the administration of the act would be that, as far as British Columbia is concerned—particularly owing to development in the last 10 or 15 years—the administration is somewhat centralized. We have a branch office in New Westminster. To this office everyone is obliged to write and from this office all the officials are obliged to travel to all parts of British Columbia. I suggest that the board would be wise to consider the establishment even on a modest scale, of one or two branch offices in the interior and northern sections of the province. I think the experience of the Veterans Land Act administration indicated that, for efficient service that procedure was necessary.

I think the present rather centralized administration, having just one office in New Westminster in British Columbia, at times creates inconvenience to the applicants as well as unnecessary delay. On account of the fact that the staff are obliged to make their headquarters at New Westminster—and I am not blaming the staff—there is a tendency to lose contact with local conditions in various parts of the province, and with farmers and farmers' organizations directly interested in the administration of this act. I also think there is a tendency on the part of those who have to deal with the larger farms—such as those in the Fraser valley and other parts—because of their lack of local contact with local conditions, to underestimate the opportunities that are provided for pioneer development. Those opportunities abound in the