

Farm Credit Act

• (1650)

Mr. Speaker, it would seem that the views of those who live the day to day problems of agriculture should be considered when legislation is drafted.

May I quote a few suggestions contained in the brief which the Canadian Federation of Agriculture submitted last April 10. It says:

An adequate adjustment and development program should ensure—

—here follows a list of different things such a program should ensure—

That governments set up, in co-operation with representatives of agricultural associations, a land purchase program that would enable farmers aged 55 and over who wish to retire, to sell their property which could probably be used to consolidate adjacent farm land surrendered to the Crown or transferred to development organizations for further development or distribution.

That a land transfer program allow present farmers to acquire the additional land that will become available and that the greatest possible number of people be encouraged to remain in the rural community.

Mr. Speaker, we are faced with a problem of migration from the farms, especially in some regions of Quebec, and I have not yet gone through the statistical data of last year's federal census. But at first glance, and according to reports received last week, I noticed, for example, that in the Champlain riding which I am honoured to represent in this House, there was a decrease of 7,000 people. Champlain being mostly a rural riding, it shows once again that the state of agriculture compels a great number of producers to abandon the industry.

The price support policy is not, in my view, a way of ensuring better food for the people. This, I think, is forgetting about the most essential problem, that of feeding individuals.

Here is another point that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture stressed, and I quote:

That support be given to those federal policies aimed at improving the opportunities offered by agriculture and providing other possibilities for those who wish to leave this industry for other sectors of work.

Indeed, many people are facing enormous difficulties; these are concrete problems that we experience daily.

The quotation goes on:

That the Canadian government be urged to establish a retirement plan to help the farmers who want to leave their farms but whose income is not sufficient to meet their needs.

Such is the situation of dairy producers, for example, in Quebec, who have worked for 10, 15, 20, 25 or 30 years to produce a food that is essential to life, that is milk and its by-products. These people come to the end of their working life and do not have enough money for an honorable retirement. That is a shameful situation in a country as rich as ours. I go on with the quotation:

That every effort be made to avoid the creation of new structures or new departments duplicating present federal or provincial departments.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture is referring to the famous conflict mentioned earlier by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Ricard), and I am referring to the harsh words spoken yesterday against the Quebec

[Mr. Matte.]

Minister of Agriculture by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Lessard).

Mr. Speaker, it is useless to cover one's face, and to shut one's eyes; one must admit that there is a conflict, that the orientation now given by the Quebec government to agriculture does not agree with that of the federal government.

We are dealing with a problem and it is not by accusing the Quebec government of mismanagement of public affairs that we shall come to a solution. It is obvious that in a country as large as ours, where you find areas as different as Quebec and the western plains, the role of the federal government is then that of a coordinating body. The federal government should aim at a better distribution of the goods and farm products in all parts of Canada. That should be the major objective of any federal government rather than attempting to interfere in areas which may appear to be within its jurisdiction under the Constitution, but which in fact, for all practical purposes, because of the duplication of departments and agencies, lead to injustice.

This may be one of the main reasons why the Quebec farmers think—and they may be wrong—that the Western farmers have a better deal.

The fact that they think so, Mr. Chairman, is detrimental to the very existence of our country. The federal government should make every effort, through appropriate coordination to avoid such conflicting views.

In order to emphasize this point, I should like to read into the record a letter which a Quebec farmer sent to the newspaper *Terre de chez nous* in which he described one of the problems I have just mentioned. I quote:

QUEBEC FARMERS PAY MORE THAN FOREIGNERS FOR THEIR GRAIN

Why must livestock breeders in Eastern Canada pay more for their grain than Westerners? The federal government has refused until now to comply with a request by minister Toupin supported by the UCC, which would force the Canadian Wheat Board to adjust rates so that livestock breeders in the East and in the West be treated as equals.

Even foreign countries that import feed grains from Canada pay less than we do. Are we going to put up with such injustice much longer? First of all a Minister of Agriculture for Eastern Canada should be appointed. There was some mention of this in Mr. Pearson's time but it did not materialize.

Mr. Trudeau has announced that a five-dollar subsidy would be paid to hog producers, but this payment applies only to hogs that are sold slaughtered, whereas in Quebec a large proportion of hogs are sold live at auction. This deprives many producers of a substantial income to which they should be entitled. Let us hope that the federal government will comply with UCC's requests and make all hogs eligible for this subsidy.

Mr. Speaker, this letter from a farmer—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the House must now proceed with consideration of private members' business.