much better is $100,000 going to be to them if there is that much more interest to be repaid?

There has been so much repetition that I will not continue at length on this subject, though I could do so. The Farm Credit Corporation is a good organization and there might be a place for Bill C-5. Nevertheless, I believe this amendment warrants consideration.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, a major feature of the bill before us is the provision which would serve as a vehicle for the government's small farm consolidation program. As such, it is an important measure and it is one which has received a good deal of consideration in recent years. Many proposals have been put forward and there have been many alternatives suggested in terms of how to deal with the situation which has developed in the farm economy and in rural societies in Canada.

As we are aware, the small farmer finds himself in many instances unable to garner an income which is in any way comparable with that to be expected in other sectors of the economy and other parts of our society. He is unable to mobilize the resources necessary to develop his enterprise in such a way as to secure an adequate income. The farmer is basically in a poor bargaining position in our economy. He is not able to bargain with the same effectiveness as other entrepreneurs when it comes to securing a fair share of the national income. This is a serious situation and one which is reflected in the deterioration we are presently witnessing in rural Canada where we find a process of disintegration taking place which is resulting in the demise of many family farm enterprises and of many rural communities. The outlook is bleak and there is no prospect of any change in the basic situation.

I see very little in this bill which would bring about basic change in the situation though I have to acknowledge there is some recognition of the problem. Nothing has been done, however, to put forward a satisfactory solution. The government has produced nothing more than the old, piecemeal type of approach to which we have been accustomed for so long. It seems that the government has taken note of its own program in this field. It is not only in the Department of Agriculture that there has been recognition of the problem. The fact is that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion is also interested in the question of small farm units as it relates to poverty in Canada, and this has been recognized in some of the ARDA programs. The department has made some play of the fact that it is engaged in a program of assistance to small farm units. But I am at a total loss to understand what co-ordination there is between the small farm program that is being carried out under ARDA and the small farm consolidation program that is proposed in this legislation and which will be administered by the Farm Credit Corporation.

• (1650)

It also seems to me that there is some conflict here, certainly a potential conflict. As I read the legislation and as I understand the government's proposals to the extent they have been elaborated on, I have no clear idea about what the government is doing. To the extent that what the government is doing can be determined, it seems that the government is interested in consolidating farm units, in creating larger farm units, in throwing people off the land, in doing away with farm units and cutting down on the number of farmers in rural Canada. Through this legislation the federal government is paying homage at the altar of size, of bigness. It is saying that the only solution to the problem it is trying to grapple with is to increase the size of farm units. This is the kind of approach that has been taken for 30 to 40 years in this country and it still has not produced any solution. I suggest that the legislation before the House will bring us no closer to a solution to the small farm problem than has any other legislation in the past. This is a repetition of the same old approach—a little bit of tinkering with the program to try to grapple with the new situation. There is nothing fundamentally new here. There is no basic change or new approach. The government is bankrupt of any imaginative ideas with regard to dealing with the problem, one that must be of concern to all Canadians.

We have here a conflict in what would appear to be a program that the government is trying to promote through ARDA to help small farm units improve their income position. Two departments are carrying on programs in this field. Are they co-ordinated? Are they working together? Have the two programs been reconciled? We have seen no evidence to suggest that this is the case. In addition, we also have the fact that a number of provinces are interested in this problem and are taking action. In my own province of Saskatchewan some initiative is being taken in the passage of legislation to provide for the establishment of a land bank to buy out farm units which are available for sale at a reasonable price and then either leasing them to young farmers, people new to farming, or eventually disposing of them if this is the wish of the farmer. The province of Saskatchewan is to be commended for launching such an imaginative new program as embodied in the land bank legislation.

From what I have read in the press, an attempt was made to see whether this program could be worked in with the proposals of the federal government as embodied in this legislation, but the federal government was not interested in what the province was attempting to do. The only thing the federal government was interested in was in buying up land and selling it off, burdening farmers with the debt of land costs, as has been the case throughout the history of Canadian agriculture. The federal government was not prepared to go along with any new proposal or concept, or even to give it a chance to work with its own program. I suggest such a government is not worthy of the confidence of the Canadian people, and the sooner we turf it out, the better.

We must also keep in mind the role played by the farm credit program in the over-all picture of the agricultural economy. I think some years ago the concept was that one of the main ways of helping the farm economy was through the provision of more adequate credit facilities. This was advocated by everyone concerned about the situation and who had any knowledge of farming. The farm credit program has been in effect now since the later 1950's and there is no question at all that it has been of assistance to many farmers.