

Farm Credit Act

the Task Force on Agriculture. I am referring to programs such as Operation Lift, the grain stabilization bill, and Bill C-176 of the previous session, which introduced national marketing. Now, a so-called small farms adjustment program is being introduced.

May I point out once again, and this must be considered, that not one farmer served on the Task Force on Agriculture. Its report is the work of academics who, in all likelihood, had little or no practical experience in the art of farming. Our problems have arisen because so-called arm-chair experts have used theory and economic ideas in their attempt to cure the ills of agriculture. In addition, this government has displayed little imagination in its policies with respect to agriculture, and has shown little devotion to the people engaged in agriculture or to their welfare. Governing in an authoritarian, highly paternalistic way, the government is not so much dedicated to curing the ills of agriculture as to removing vast numbers of people from that industry.

Broadening the Farm Credit Act for the immediate future will simply mean the administration of the small farm development program. Probably, we should more appropriately refer to the program as the small farms adjustment program. I know it is to be called the small farms development plan, simply because development has more political appeal than adjustment. Really, however, the guts of the proposal are the same as before. You cannot change the guts of the program merely by changing the title of the bill. So far as I am concerned, this bill spells adjustment and consolidation, and the program is based on the March 8 policy paper, which contains a general, broad outline on which the federal government has been unable to reach a consensus with the provinces. It is a policy with respect to which we, the members of parliament, have been unable to elicit concrete information. We do not know the extent of the program. We have been highly unsuccessful in our efforts at seeing the matter clarified. The minister failed to enlighten the committee. The people representing the Farm Credit Corporation could not, because many of the questions concerned policy, enlighten us to any great degree with regard to the program. There are many unknowns about the government's small farm development program. I think the government is adopting a hit-and-miss, trial-by-error approach, which is tarnished with political bait. If one examines pages 7 and 8 of Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, No. 2, one will see the definition of a small farm. Apparently, that definition will vary according to the number of applications which are received. One does not know exactly what definition will be used.

If one examines carefully the report of the Farm Credit Corporation, one will see that the majority of so-called small farmers reside in Quebec and in the Maritimes. How are the funds to be allocated? How are the amounts to be divided? We have not been able to get answers. We are aware of one thing only, Mr. Speaker: that the government's underlying motive is to encourage the people to leave the land. They want to remove vast numbers of people from agriculture. This policy will have a further devastating impact on our rural communities. How the program in question is to be carried out we do not know exactly. We only know that the provinces have not been

[Mr. Mazankowski.]

able to agree on it. Farm organizations do not necessarily agree. The people of my constituency do not agree.

In February, 1971, I sent out a questionnaire which asked simply: "Are you in favour of consolidating farms into larger units?" Ten per cent said yes, 82 per cent said no and 8 per cent were undecided. A news report in the *Edmonton Journal* has this to say about Mr. A. M. Runciman, a most knowledgeable and respected man in the grains industry:

A. M. Runciman of Winnipeg, United Grain Growers president, says a global approach seems to be the only way 'we can get some answers to the universal conundrum of low incomes for the majority of farmers—

Mr. Ruciman defined the federal program in 1970 which paid farmers to take land out of wheat production as 'infamous' and said the announcement of the small farm development program this week was another step in the wrong direction.

• (1620)

I am quoting from the December 9 edition of the *Edmonton Journal*.

Mr. Runciman is concerned with other farm spokesmen about the new federal development program which, "regardless of the fine words ... aims to reduce the number of farmers in this country."

Several farm spokesmen point to the report on the future of agriculture in the 1970s, made by a federally-appointed committee last year, which advocated a reduction of one-third of the 400,000 farms in Canada.

"It's hard to make sense of phasing out a Canadian farmer who can grow wheat for say \$1.20 a bushel when a European farmer continues to produce even though he can't get his costs for growing wheat below \$2," Mr. Runciman said.

He said nothing will be solved until Canada attempts to get agreement in principle among the various producing countries on long-term policies aimed at stabilizing production; and that the trend of Ottawa's policy will continue to hurt Canada's farmers.

I have no objection to the senior members of the agricultural industry voluntarily opting out of agriculture and retiring or, for that matter, any other group. I believe the senior people in agriculture should be allowed to retire with dignity. Through the rationalization and adjustment program for the textile industry, the federal government was able to assist those who were forced into making some social adjustments. However, I am concerned about who will be filling the void that will be created by the vast numbers who will be encouraged to leave the land as a result of this small farm development program. Will it be corporate holdings or syndicates?

Where does a young fellow with a deep desire to engage in the business of farming fit into the over-all program? What incentives are there for the young man? What encouragement and positive advice is there for him to become interested or actively engaged in the industry? This is basically what the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Mackenzie (Mr. Korchinski) sets out to do. If we are going to have a program which encourages people to leave agriculture, we must have another program to attract people into the industry. If we do not do this, our rural communities will die. Without this kind of approach, the so-called farm development program will be more accurately referred to as a "small farm extinction" program.

In its latest report, the Farm Credit Corporation stated that the number of applications by young people has