

Oral Questions

individual farmers, and that the plan is open to political manipulation. The Prairies are crying out for amendments so as to make a good principle workable.

In this period when farm receipts are equal to those of 1973 but the operating costs have tripled, the fact that the fund will be storing approximately \$1 billion by January 1, 1984, mocks and insults our farmers. The intent of their investment has been betrayed.

I and my colleagues call upon the Government to amend the western grain stabilization plan quickly to make it sensitive to the realities of our economy, and to function in concert with the general expectations of the producer investors.

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MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

FUND RAISING BY MR. CROSBIE

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Madam Speaker, the Member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie), the Conservative Finance critic, is reported to have a \$200,000 deficit from his leadership campaign. Following in the footsteps of that world renowned feminist, Hugh Hefner, the Member is planning to pay off his debts by holding a little fund raising bash featuring a former "Playboy" Playmate of the Year.

We all know of the Conservative Party's impressive track record on women's issues as exemplified in its caucus where women make up only 3 per cent of its members. I am glad to see that traditional Conservative sensitivity toward women is being upheld by the Hon. Member for St. John's West.

In fact, when questioned by the press as to the role of the playmate he said that she will not be the main course. He said:

She will be the aperitif.

He also said that he had abandoned the imaginative idea of wrapping his playmate in a Newfoundland flag and auctioning it off. He said:

Someone would say it was sexist.

He added:

You've got to be so careful these days not to be sexist.

And finally he said:

There'll be nothing sexist going on there, at least not in public.

I assume the three women Members in that caucus will pass up the opportunity to be humiliated at the fund raising function and will, instead, mail in their cheques.

• (1415)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

FARM CREDIT CORPORATION

AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Agriculture. The position of the Farm Credit Corporation as the main lender to the agricultural community has deteriorated to a point where it is being referred to as a lender of last resort. What is the Government doing to ensure that Farm Credit will have enough funding so that it can lend on a regular and long-term basis to provide Canadian farmers with certainty and accessibility to funding on a regular basis?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, the Hon. Member should check the legislation by which Farm Credit is bound in its operations. The Crown corporation will be lending this year the most money it has ever lent in its history. It will lend somewhere between \$700 million and \$800 million. It is the eleventh largest lending institution in Canada. We cannot take private lending institutions off the hook for all the money that farmers want. Private lending institutions have a responsibility. It used to be that 17 per cent of the loans went for refinancing farm operations. This year nearly 60 per cent of all loans we make will be taking over debts which farmers have with private lending institutions.

I would like to have perhaps a large rural bank. Is that what the Hon. Member is suggesting, that we form another Crown corporation in Canada so that we can offer farmers short-term money? I was in British Columbia with a Member from that area this week. We met hundreds of farmers who are in really dire financial straits. But mostly the banks are cutting off their money, are cutting off their operating funds, and are cutting them off the long-term money they had. Is the Hon. Member suggesting that I take over from the banks?

Mr. Lewis: The Minister is on record as saying, "We want more money, we want to move the Corporation back into lending".

REFINANCING OF FARMERS' LOANS

Mr. Doug Lewis (Simcoe North): Madam Speaker, Farm Credit asked for \$600 million in June. The Minister of Finance approved less than half that request, and it is not even all advanced. What advice does the Minister of Agriculture have for a Canadian farmer who is refinancing a bank loan or buying a farm? Should he apply to a bank or to Farm Credit?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, under the Bank Act banks have a responsibility to lend to people who can comply with the rules and regulations of a proper lending authority. The banks have a responsibility