

*Oral Questions***FARM CREDIT CORPORATION****FARMER'S REQUEST FOR LOWER INTEREST RATE**

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. McDermid: Leader.

Mr. Hovdebo: During the last few days I have received many letters regarding the interest rates charged by the Farm Corporation. I want to quote from one letter as follows:

This interest rate is very high and I am having trouble making my payments. I am wondering if there is some way that this loan could be changed to a lower rate of interest.

The letter is signed by a Mr. William R. Walter who lives in Codette, Saskatchewan.

Can the Minister give me an answer that I can pass on to Mr. Walter?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member can tell his constituent that my concern for his constituent is as great as his.

Mr. Stevens: Throw your hat in the ring.

Mr. Crosbie: Don't forget to put your head in it.

Mr. Whelan: We are investigating and trying to find a way that we can lower the interest rate for about 8,700 farmers who are paying as high as 16.75 per cent. As I said in the House the other day—and this question has been asked several times, Mr. Speaker—when we were loaning that money at that rate, 16¼, 16½, 16.75 per cent, the cheapest the farmers could get it was 20 per cent, 21 per cent, and 22 per cent. Also we subsidized that rate. For some of them it was 5 per cent, and for some of them 4 per cent subsidization—

Mr. Stevens: Did you?

Mr. Whelan: —which brought the rate down in some instances to 12 per cent, and in some instances to below 12 per cent. To say that we have not done anything—and the Hon. Member has not said that, but I am surmising what his supplementary question is going to be—we have done more here probably than any other part. We are concerned and we are hoping to put forward a paper to work out a long-term policy on these rates if we can.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER EXTEND EMERGENCY AID PROGRAM

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question is for the Minister of Agriculture. One in seven Farm Credit Corporation borrowers is in arrears and in trouble. Since the Minister of Finance has indicated that he has no intention of doing anything about the high and increasing interest rates, would the Minister of Agriculture extend, at least for those few farmers who are getting some benefits from

his emergency program, the program beyond April 1 and make it available to another 8,000 farmers who are in trouble because of the high interest rates of this Government?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, when the Hon. Member refers to the Minister of Finance, let me say the Minister of Finance has been very responsive in the past when we have made requests to assist farmers who found themselves in financial difficulty. He has not told me that he is not going to be responsive to any reasonable, constructive suggestion that I am liable to make to him.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING**COST OF ADVERTISEMENT ON TRADE**

Hon. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State for International Affairs.

Mr. Regan: Minister of International Trade.

Mr. Nielsen: I am sorry, Minister of International Trade. I certainly would not want to downgrade a potential leadership candidate like him, Sir.

Mr. Crosbie: In the 21st Century.

Mr. Nielsen: Did his department, or the Department of External Affairs, pay for an eight page, full colour advertisement appearing in *The Globe and Mail* today lauding the awesome accomplishments in the field of External Affairs personally brought about by the Minister and the Government and bearing no relationship whatever in terms of our foreign trade being due to any other factor, such as the falling dollar? The question is related to the justification for the expense in printing that kind of trash.

Hon. Gerald Regan (Minister for International Trade): Mr. Speaker, Canadians—

Mr. Crosbie: Throw your hat in the ring, Gerry.

Mr. Stevens: You are their only hope.

An Hon. Member: You can walk in the fog.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Regan: They are unruly today, Prime Minister.

Mr. McDermid: Do you have to check in every five minutes?

Mr. Regan: I am very happy to do so.

The Hon. Member belongs to a Party that never likes to hear good news. I am surprised at the fact that he can greet as bad news something that I consider to be the subject for tremendous satisfaction and enthusiasm, and that is the job that we are doing in international trade.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!