

Farm Credit Act

we supported the government's effort to put western agriculture back on its feet, to help farmers get out of the slump they were in, from 1929 to 1939. Well, today, our eastern farmers are in exactly the same situation. Let us come to their assistance.

I feel confident that the minister will give serious consideration to the requests we put before him, not only on this side of the house, but also on his side, because there are, on that side also, hon. members who represent agricultural and rural ridings in the province of Quebec, as well as in Ontario and the maritime provinces.

Heed should be paid to the requests submitted by those people who are not reaching for the moon, but who want a just and fair treatment. The Minister of Agriculture must accede to the requests of eastern farmers.

Hon. Théogène Ricard (St. Hyacinthe-Bagot): Mr. Speaker, Bill No. C-100 is so important to a large area of my riding that I could not let it pass without saying a few words.

First of all, I want to pay tribute to the personnel of the Department of Agriculture, and more particularly to that of the Farm Credit Corporation. I want also to tell them that I greatly appreciated their co-operation, because each time I had to work with them, they acceded with great readiness to my requests.

However, I must say that I never insisted to obtain things which were not logical. On the contrary, I have always attempted to put forward requests as just and equitable as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to speak about the staff of the St. Hyacinthe office and state that since 1958, in particular, the business of the corporation has been so good that the staff had to be tripled, even quadrupled. Now, if the staff had to be increased, it is because business had increased.

I am happy to learn that it is proposed to add beekeeping and to extend farm credit facilities to this area of agriculture.

Beekeeping is an important part of agriculture.

Since the minister worked for a number of years on a farm where bees were kept, that is in an apple-growing district, I am sure he will be interested in helping out a large number of our farmers. Indeed, in several parts of the province, of the country even, people carry out that kind of operation and the equipment required to produce honey is often quite costly.

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The minister is not without knowing that beekeepers suffer heavy losses at times. For instance, if their hives are struck by an epidemic, they face hardship when they cannot replace their equipment.

Therefore, as I said, I am very happy to see that beekeepers will now be able to take advantage of farm credit.

Mr. Speaker, since you represent a predominantly agricultural riding, you must share my opinion and that of many others here in the house who think that a special effort must be made to preserve and protect the family farm.

In the province of Quebec, as well as in Ontario, the family farm is a unit that must be protected at all costs. Even if the government were to do more for that small farm unit, I am sure he would get the support of all members of parliament.

In recent years, when the cost of machinery is ever increasing, the farmers, especially the small farmers, must necessarily be assisted. I for one will certainly not blame the government for the assistance it will grant this sector of the population.

Moreover, I urge the minister to do his utmost so that, if possible, greater assistance under various forms may be granted small farm industry.

Unfortunately, while considering Bill No. C-100 we have to admit that the purpose of the government is not primarily to help the small agricultural industry, the family farm, but rather big enterprise.

My hon. friend, the member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden) said that special attention should be given this problem.

I think it is proper to remind the minister that by extending credit, by making credit more readily available to large farming organizations we are not really helping the farmer; if we do not protect and help the small farmer, it is not by training him that he will be able later on to operate on a big scale. The small farm is the real place where the farmer can familiarize himself with the many complex problems of nature and farming. That is why I believe that instead of trying to help the larger farm corporations, often operated by people known as gentlemen farmers whose main revenues are not derived from farming, we should rather try to help the small farmer.

When a farmer applies to the corporation to obtain a loan, it often happens that he comes up against regulations which work to his disadvantage, and I think that the minister should see to it that more consideration