

Farm Loans

speaking there are perhaps three or four or even five times as many older, affluent farmers who have gone through the process of building up their operation and who now have some money to invest. They may put it in a term deposit these days when interest rates are so high, but I think they would be very pleased to see their money go into a special Farm Credit Corporation fund knowing that it would help younger farmers to borrow money at more attractive interest rates. I think that suggestion could be adopted with very good results.

I should like to comment on two meetings of cattlemen which occurred recently, Mr. Speaker, one of which I attended last week and one about which I heard a great deal. The Minister of Agriculture knows about both of them. I was not able to attend the meeting held in Hanna where the minister was the guest speaker at night. This meeting commenced at 8.30 in the morning and approximately 500 people, mostly cattlemen, attended. It was well organized by a couple of district agriculturalists and people in the Hanna community. Able spokesmen from different areas of the cattle industry addressed it. One was my old friend, whom the minister knows, from the University of Saskatchewan, Professor Red Williams. The Minister of Agriculture for Alberta, Dallas Schmidt and a number of other highly qualified people, were also on the program.

Even though the minister did not arrive until toward the end of the meeting, I am sure he knows about it. His able representative Jim Lockhart in Alberta was there and I am sure has given him a full report of the meeting and of the atmosphere that prevailed. The feeling that came through was that the cattle industry in Alberta was not ready for the minister's solution, which is to blame all our troubles on the marketing system. That is nonsense, Mr. Speaker. That message came through the meeting over and over again.

The other meeting, the annual meeting of the Western Stock Growers Association, was held in Red Deer and lasted three days. That association has been meeting in annual convention for well over 80 years. The main subject of debate at that meeting, which did not draw such a big crowd, was stabilization of the industry. The day before the convention started, the board of directors put together a resolution which said rather bluntly that cattlemen in Alberta wanted no part of any stabilization program for the industry that included taxpayers' money from any government. That was a very hard line position to take. I contributed my personal comments to the debate and said that in my opinion, partly because of the very critical situation in Ontario, the federal stabilization legislation that is on the books should be used in the crisis in the cattle industry.

The minister has heard me say in the House that three participants should be involved in this—the federal government using its own legislation, the governments of the cattle provinces which essentially are B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, and there is even some interest from the maritimes, and the cattle producers themselves. I suggested that it is still possible to make a stabilization pay-out for 1981 under that legislation. Within a week or two we should

know what the average market price was for last year. The minister has discretionary powers in this respect. If 90 per cent will not do it, then 95 per cent might. That is what the minister said during an opposition day debate in the House. In fact, he has even gone higher with a precedent for it. I followed that suggestion by saying that the participation of cattlemen would take many months to come about. But surely that is the logical solution.

I appreciate that the minister is here tonight and is listening to my remarks. Once again I would ask him to give some consideration to the larger picture, to the long-range solution of the crisis in the cattle industry today. In my opinion, it is the worst in 30 years. Perhaps a worse situation occurred in February, 1952, when foot and mouth disease broke out around Regina. Overnight, the United States government placed a total embargo on cattle going to the United States. Prices for fed cattle, feeder cattle and everything dropped by half.

That is some of the background of the first go-around on the marketing board debate which only occurred in western Canada. It was promoted in Manitoba by Mr. Jake Schultz, in Saskatchewan by Joe Phelps and in Alberta by Roy Marler and a poultryman called Mr. Kappler. At that time there was a great debate going on because of unsatisfactory cattle prices. It is interesting that the governments of the day, federal or provincial, were not involved.

I remind the minister of this bit of history and ask him to look again at the crisis that exists in the cattle industry today. Let us work to find a different solution than bringing in a board with supply-management powers.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jack Murta (Lisgar): Mr. Speaker, I have a little less than ten minutes in which to close this debate. I should like to begin by saying that I am deeply concerned about the state of agriculture in this country. Most hon. members in the House and most people in my constituency know of my interest in agriculture over the years. I come from the agricultural area of southern Manitoba and I have been actively involved in a farm operation. At the present time agriculture is faced with one of the worst crises and most difficult situations in a long time. We see a great deal of balkanization in the country between provinces, in some places between commodity groups and even between sectors within those commodity groups. We have a system of top-loading in which provinces literally compete with each other in terms of attracting particular parts of the agricultural industry. The effect of top-loading is that income in some cases does not come from the marketplace where it should, but comes from provincial governments which, in most cases, are willing and able to finance and support the various agricultural programs within their own provinces. This is very disconcerting for a country with our potential, not only to supply food for ourselves but to make agriculture the number one export earner. Our transportation system is slowly grinding to a halt, literally, and we are not able to ship the amount of grain to our ports that we should be. To top it all off, the