

Farm Credit Act

Mr. MacInnis: On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, apparently the minister has been misinformed by the authorities. I have a letter in my possession which outlines quite clearly that this man has not been on the job long enough for his qualifications to be assessed. Without question, he was taken on without experience. This leads to another question which the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should probably deal with. How can they bring a man in from Scotland without giving him some kind of status under the immigration laws? It is all a pack of lies.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to advise hon. members that we have reached the end of the question period. I wish to remind hon. members that we should from day to day make every effort, by mutual consent and agreement, to limit the number of supplementaries asked. I know that in theory we might spend the whole question period on the same subject. Many of these matters are very important and would justify our spending a full question period on them. However, when questions are two or three minutes long, as some are, hon. members are deprived of opportunities to ask questions. If hon. members will examine the questions the next day as they appear in *Hansard*, they will see that many look more like speeches than questions. This applies also to replies made by ministers, which I feel are often too long. This, I suggest, deprives hon. members of an opportunity to ask questions which are important.

I have noted a number of hon. members in the third, fourth and fifth rows who have not had an opportunity to ask their questions. I will honestly try to make every effort tomorrow to give them an opportunity to ask their questions, and I apologize to them for not being able to reach them despite my best efforts. Orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

FARM CREDIT ACT

AMENDMENTS RESPECTING LOANS AND POWERS AND CAPITAL OF CORPORATION

The House resumed, from Monday, May 8, consideration of the motion of Mr. Olson that Bill C-5, to amend the Farm Credit Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and the amendment of Mr. Korchinski (p. 1872) and the amendment to the amendment (Mr. Knight) (p. 1903).

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, just before debate on this bill adjourned last night, I had been discussing the role of farm credit within the framework of a comprehensive farm program. The point I was trying to make was that, in the thinking of some farm groups during the past years, too much emphasis has been placed on the value of a farm credit program by itself. This does not mean that we underrate the fundamental importance of an adequate farm credit program. However, I think the farm credit program is only one part of the equation necessary to produce an effective, over-all farm program.

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

If we are to have a farm credit program that will fulfil the desired objectives, it is necessary that it be complemented by an adequate farm income program, an adequate pricing program, some measures to control the cost of goods that farmers must buy and ensure that adequate services are available to them to carry on their business. It is very important to keep these points in mind. This leaves aside for a moment the question of the merits of the measure before us and simply attempts to deal with the problem of farm credit within the context of a comprehensive farm program. It is necessary to view it in this sort of context if we are to come forward with an adequate program.

• (1500)

In dealing with the subject of farm credit and the structure of the farm industry in general, in recent years there have been too many instances of tribute being paid to the concept of the absolute necessity for increasing the size of the farm unit if farm problems are to be solved. In fact, there is some basis in economics for this sort of contention. In many respects, it is obvious that larger size farm units contribute to a more efficient operation. However, in recent years we have seen that an increase in size does not result in a better farm operation or the solution of the problems facing agriculture. When we referred to size in the past, the primary consideration was the size of the land holding or the physical size of the unit. We have to keep in mind that in agriculture today it is not necessarily related to the size of land holdings. In fact, size can be more closely related to intensive features of farm operations. Investment in the development of productive facilities on a very small land holding may be more productive in some cases and more important than the land holdings involved in a farm unit.

I took careful note of the comments made yesterday by the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan). He referred to the role of economists, his appraisal of economists and the poor service they have rendered to farmers in many instances in the past. I believe I correctly noted the context of the hon. member's remarks. I have to say a word about this because I have some credentials in this field. I hope the hon. member will listen closely because he might learn something. It is society that has assigned to the economist a role which does not properly belong to him. In many cases society has set up the economist as the final repository of wisdom in dealing with a complex of factors which involve a combination of social and economic considerations. The role of the economist is a particular one. If he is called upon to pass judgment within the framework of many considerations that should be clearly understood. The economist has his role to play just as the engineer and other professionals have their role to play. An engineer may respond to a request that the steam pressure on a boiler be doubled. He may say that is nonsense and, if you do that, the boiler will blow up. That is the engineering consequences of such a proposal or decision.

Similarly, the economist can quite validly point out the economic consequences of a certain course of action. However, all too often economists have been called upon to make social and value judgments which are not within the purview of the professional competence or skill of the economist as such. They may lie within his field of inter-