

Farm Credit Act

I am convinced that together, without resorting to political partisanship, we shall fight for the benefit of our constituencies, our province and our country.

(Text):

Mr. Whelan: It is a great pleasure for me to take part in this debate on the Farm Credit Corporation. As a member of a farm organization which made representations on the type of farm credit body we should have in Canada, I can say that the Farm Credit Corporation is part of what we sought. It is not all we asked for, by far, but it is a part.

The area I come from, southwestern Ontario, has the most diversified farming in the country and we feel the Farm Credit Corporation does not entirely suit the needs of our area. We feel that a system whereby farmers in western Canada can share their crops in order to pay off a mortgage should be introduced in eastern Canada, especially in southwestern Ontario. We have a large greenhouse industry in that area and it should be treated the same as wheat farming in western Canada. We can all have crop failures. I ask the committee tonight, with this loan association the way it is organized now, and pointing to the large loans that are being made, are we creating a modern form of feudalism or not? We see so many of our farms becoming larger and larger. This is the thing that caused most of our forefathers to come to Canada. They wanted to get away from conditions of that kind. With this type of farming, instead of the large castle on the one hand and the mud hut on the other, we have the large ranch-type house and the small cottage on the side of the workers. This is something that we do not condone.

Our area is a wonderful agricultural producing area. However, I would say, with regard to most of our agricultural products, that we would not be producing as much as we are if we were not using so much slave labour. I say this rather broadly, but it is true. In our area, which is made up predominantly of families that originally came from Europe, who are growing vegetables, and so on, every member of the family works but they do not all get paid. This is a factor we should consider when we point to farm income and how great it is. If we did the same thing in our cities and made every child from the age of seven or eight years do some chore for the city and contribute to the welfare of the city, what a burden unemployment would be in the city. But this is what is happening today as far as agricultural production is concerned.

We in the rural areas sincerely believe that we are not treated in the same way as our urban cousins. Some hon. members may won-

der why I make this statement, but it is true. Under this loan legislation you cannot borrow more than \$7,500 with which to build a house, and you may have many more assets than your urban cousin needs to buy a home in the city. We feel this is unjust, because all hon. members know what kind of a house can be built today for \$7,500. It is not comparable at all to the type of house in which our city cousins live.

The need for increased loans is something I should like to speak about, Mr. Chairman. We in our area, as I said earlier, have a large greenhouse industry. This industry, again, is run mainly by families in the area. But this is an industry that requires a great deal of capital; there is a great deal of investment in it. I would say this is the type of industry we should be promoting in Canada, because this is, again, a deficient industry; we are not producing anywhere near the amount of vegetables that we need in this country. They are being imported and we are spending Canadian dollars in the United States for the same products. There is a continuing demand from people in the greenhouse industry who need more money in order that they may make their units, as we call them, economical. The way this loan legislation is set up now, it does not provide for that.

I would also at this time, Mr. Chairman, like to say that in our area we too can have disasters as they can in the west. We would like to be treated in the same way as they are in the west when they have a disaster and receive assistance in, say, payments on par. I would suggest that some provision should be made in the act to cover this type of thing. If the loan is for one year and the payments cannot be met because of a disaster, a flood or storm that wipes out the crops, into which a tremendous amount of labour has been put by the families, the people affected should be allowed to repay their loans at a very low rate of interest or at no interest at all. This type of benefit should be provided by the corporation. The cost of crop insurance in our country is very high for the type of crops produced. Our province has not entered into any crop insurance program at this time.

I should also like to say that I think the Minister of Agriculture is probably right in asking for another \$100 million, if farming in Canada continues on the way it has, especially in southwestern Ontario, where we now have to compete with the United States producers on everything we grow. Nearly everything we grow in that area is deficient in Canada, and we could produce enough for the needs of Canada if we were given the proper co-operation by the government.