

Family Farm

formula an opportunity to control rural depopulation, while allowing the establishment of profitable units.

This policy makes it possible to keep the rural population on the farm even though not directly involved in farming production. Those people have grown up, lived and worked many years in a farming district. I think that, if they could do so and if it were profitable, they would like above all to continue to live in that environment and work as much as possible in the farming sector. I think that the hon. member's proposal deserves our support, but what he had to say—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

[*English*]

Mr. MacEachen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wish to say that certain discussions have been continuing and I think it might be worth while, before we give up in despair, disagreement or futility to agree that when we return from the royal assent we suspend our sitting until the call of the bells and resume at that time to deal with the adjournment motion or motions. At least we will have an opportunity to make another effort, and even if we fail we can say that we have failed after a final effort.

Mr. Bell: Mr. Speaker, we agree with that. Perhaps if we were to walk very slowly to the Senate it would give the negotiators some more time.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, we also agree. Perhaps on the way there and on the way back, if our colleagues from Quebec who have such good voices would sing Christmas carols, that might improve the spirit.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call on the hon. member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Schellenberger) I would also suggest that on our way back from the Senate, while the singing goes on, we might like to congregate in room 16 until six o'clock—and there I might find some way to deal with dissenters. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Stan Schellenberger (Wetaskiwin): Mr. Speaker, I want to maintain the Christmas spirit, but I wish to make a few remarks on a subject that I consider very important not only at Christmas but at all times, namely, the mass migration that we have experienced of rural young Canadians to the cities. The hon. member who preceded me said that successive Liberal governments had done much to keep Canadians on the farms, but the statistics tell us that we have now only 350,000 farmers in Canada. This is a disastrous situation, an emergency situation. We must get more young Canadians to remain on farms.

We have heard much talk from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). We have listened to and read his speeches with interest—but he has not brought forth any policy. At the present time he is taking advantage of high prices, ignoring a number of high cost areas which will keep farmers in a low profit situation. All farmers in Canada must have a higher reward for their labours. It is necessary to bring forward policies that will give farmers adequate income and encourage them to stay on farms. In

[Mr. Lessard.]

the last few months we have heard much about the Farm Credit Corporation which was established to enable young farmers to get loans in order to start in the farm business. When I look at the statistics I see that 60 per cent of the loans went to persons over 35 years of age, and only 40 per cent to persons under that age group. In order to take care of these farmers who could not apply or be accepted for farm credit, the Small Farm Development Corporation was set up. But really all the corporation does is allow those people turned down by farm credit to make application to it. It in fact consolidates farmers. More and more young farmers and older farmers are going to the cities.

● (1700)

Instead of just talking about what the government is going to do, I think it is time the Progressive Conservative Party made a few more suggestions. As we see, they seem to be accepted more and more by the Liberal Party, so perhaps it is to our advantage to make some positive recommendations. We talk about the dairy problem which is becoming very urgent at the moment. We find that we have to import butter and cheese. For years this was one of our chief exports, particularly to the European countries. I think the problem there is one of overcapitalization, the high cost of getting into dairy farming and the problem of getting good farm labour. This would be an excellent program on which the government could offer something that has been presented by the government of Alberta, that is, to subsidize the wages of farm labourers. We have a problem with unemployment. Until the people who are unemployed can find jobs, they could perhaps spend a few weeks or months on the farm learning where their food comes from.

The problem is that, with their inadequate incomes, farmers cannot today afford to pay the high salaries that are necessary to attract labour. This program has had reasonable success in Alberta although it has only been tried with high school and university students. But there is no reason why it could not be accepted on a federal basis. The government could perhaps pay half the salary, and the farmer the other half and look after the room and board. I think we should experiment with this program, and perhaps it would meet with reasonable success.

Another thing that has been missing for many years, and one reason why young people have been migrating to the cities, is that there are no programs available to keep young people in a happy community, one with all the advantages of the city. The government should make loans to small communities so they can provide recreational facilities and community clubs that would keep not only the farmer happy but the most essential part of his family happy, his wife and his children, so they would not be encouraged to leave the farm and go to the city. I have spoken about this on a private member's motion before, and I hope that the government will look into this matter with great speed.

I have before me some statistics showing that capitalization costs in farming have increased tremendously. We are now faced with higher costs for fertilizer this year, higher costs for machinery, and even weed spray. This has always been a basic problem for agriculture: when young people want to get into farming, or stay in farming, there is always the problem of an adequate supply of capital. Once