

Farm Credit Act

Mr. Gleave: Mr. Speaker, I want this government to do something about the income factor. I have mentioned that there has been a severe drop in the acreage of rapeseed this year. This is a major concern, and if something was being done about it we might have a little more confidence in the credit policy. If something was being done to stabilize prices, we might have a little more confidence and if something was being done about the cost we might have a little more confidence.

The fertilizer companies have been holding the farmers of western Canada to ransom for two years, and we cannot get the responsible department to do anything about it. I was amazed this afternoon, when the minister was asked about fertilizer prices, and he replied "If you will send me something other than rumours, I will be glad to look at it." Mr. Speaker, it is blazoned all over the front page of the "*Union Farmer*". A letter came into my hands almost a week ago which shows that fertilizer costs \$19 or \$20 a ton more in Manitoba and Saskatchewan than on the other side of the border. Some of that fertilizer comes from the minister's own riding of Medicine Hat, and some of it comes from Kimberley in the mountains, so I cannot understand why the minister is not aware of this.

Another thing that I cannot understand, Mr. Speaker, is why the government allows a cartel to rook the farmers of western Canada when they are trying to reach some efficiency of production, nor can I understand why the government allowed a cartel to rook the farmers of Ontario last year. Last year fertilizer cost \$97 a ton in Biggar, but this year the same thing will cost at least \$15 a ton more. I cannot understand the government's indifference to the real plight of the farmer.

We had a voluminous report on farm machinery and spent a lot of money on it but with what result? Some hon. members jest about Roumanian tractors. That may be a joke for some people.

An hon. Member: They will hear from their friends in Massey-Ferguson.

Mr. Gleave: I do not think this is going to turn the picture upside down. What assistance is the ordinary farmer getting who is trying to improve his efficiency and productivity in order to survive? This question cannot be ignored, because this is the man who pays the taxes and keeps the whole rural infrastructure going as do the people in the small towns. The only reason for the existence of these communities is to see that the farmer is well served and able to operate. What are we doing to help them? To say that the answer is to bring in a manpower program to get these people out of these communities begs the question. With the rate of unemployment we have, where do they go? This is the relevant question, and the Farm Credit Corporation recognizes it in a statement on the first page of its report to the effect that the lack of opportunity for employment off the farm is one of the important factors keeping people on the farm. Of course it is; they have no place else to go.

When this bill goes to committee let us not ignore this fact. Lest us not go to the farmer weeks from now and say that we have solved his problem, that we have a program. Let us not say that to the farmer unless we really have a program to which he can look forward with some hope

[Mr. Cullen.]

and confidence for the future. That is the nub of the question.

• (1650)

You know, I could go on talking about the policies which have been mentioned, policies involving agricultural adjustment or development programs for Canadian agriculture. These policies are something like the grain stabilization bill which was conceived by and first saw the light of day in the Task Force on Agriculture. That is the source of these ideas. I will not spend time berating the Task Force on Agriculture. I only regret that it was not made up of men of imagination who could chart new frontiers for agriculture, instead of gathering up the old shibboleths and putting them in a bag. Now, one by one, they are emerging, and we are looking at them. As Canadians, we can do better than that. In examining this bill, let us try to do better.

One cannot quarrel too much with the criteria used for this program. The availability of non-farm employment is a criterion. According to the document in my hand, Agricultural Adjustment or Development Policy, that is to be one criterion. In other words, when the department talks about the rate of adjustment from agriculture, it means that the criterion under which farmers will get another kind of job is the availability of non-farm employment. That is elementary, my dear Watson, elementary. The key phrase should not be the availability of non-farm employment, but the availability of opportunity. Other criteria listed are, the availability of training, the difference in skills required, the age and education of the operator, the availability of capital to finance relocation, the ability to liquidate farm assets, and so on. All the same, the most important criterion is the very first listed, the availability of non-farm employment. That is the first one listed and the most important.

Let me go on for a moment. Somebody slipped, I see, and on page 6 of this document we find the statement that the policies depend for their operational efficiency on the effectiveness of the first set of programs—those designed to increase the mobility of resources and to grease the wheels of the adjustment process. As I said, someone slipped and used basic English. May I refer to other aspects mentioned in this document. On page 9, I see reference to a rural counselling service required to assist the farmer and his family make the basic decision to continue in agriculture, and so on. The document also mentions farm management services—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I regret interrupting the hon. member who has the floor. The hon. member would be in order if he were relating his remarks to the question of farm credit, which, as the hon. member knows, is the subject now before the House. I suggest that his remarks should not range too widely from that subject.

Mr. Gleave: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bill deals with the subjects I have mentioned. The bill indicates that provision shall be made, after land has been sold, for an individual to remain on that land if he does not want to move away. The bill looks at that situation. May I point out, with all respect, that it looks at the situation in which