

Rural Development

Nowadays, most of those remaining in those agricultural sectors have to work in our cities, in our mines and other industries in order to support their farms because the land no longer feeds the farmer.

Now the minister tells us that he has found out poor people in those settlements and in the agricultural parishes. Kindly take note of this. Some members of Parliament claim, as we were told last night on the C.B.C. radio network, during the news report: "Settlers live in slums and shanties; the Abitibi settlers are unhappy".

The settlers of Abitibi are no more unfortunate than those of Lotbinière or those of Montreal who live in shanties. Our settlers are as respectable as any of those people. They are getting bad publicity. There may be some poor people but in comparison with other areas, there are not more in our area than in Montreal or in Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata, Charlevoix, Lotbinière or in any other agricultural riding of the province.

There is in our northern area an exclusively agricultural county, that of Témiscamingue, which has perhaps the best farming land in the province of Quebec, and there again the farmers experience difficulties. Why? The farmers do not want to work. Their farms are not large enough. I heard the premier of the province of Quebec mention this fact on television. It is intended to reorganize the farms, to create collective farms, since an area of 100 acres is not large enough to ensure the livelihood of a family, but most of these farmers have no more than 40 to 50 acres of arable soil ready for production.

If we could only assure the farmers and the settlers that they can sell their products and earn a profit, Mr. Speaker, the farmers in Quebec and in eastern Canada would undoubtedly double, triple and quadruple their production in a few years.

The minister indicates that it is so. Then, why spend hundreds of millions of dollars to say that we are looking for the poor whereas we should spend those millions to assure the sale of their products? He was saying that we must be able to expand markets. We are told every day, every week and every month that two thirds of the world are underfed, that people in India are underfed, and they tell us in the House of Commons, in Canada, one of the most affluent countries in the whole world, that we must find markets for Canadian farm products.

[Mr. Caouette.]

Mr. Speaker, it is a shame to hear such statements in the Parliament of one of the wealthiest nations in the world. It is neither the markets nor the market possibilities which are lacking but the financing which would secure the sale of the farmer's products.

The Minister of Forestry knows very well that I am right on that point. Let us guarantee the farmer the sale of his products and you will see a decrease in the number of the poor in the rural areas of our country. This guarantee of sale of the products, Mr. Speaker, will put a check on the desertion of family farms, prevent the creation of community farms, and a farmer on a 100 acre-farm will be able to do well and even have employees.

We have seen community farms in Russia: Their agricultural production has been decreasing year after year for the past ten years. In Canada, because of the family farm, our agricultural production has increased.

Today, in Quebec, we do not produce 50 per cent of the consumption of our province. It is said that we lack markets, openings. Let us be reasonable. Let us use our brains and organize agriculture on a viable base which will allow the agricultural class to live like the other classes of our society.

Bill C-151 stipulates that an amount not exceeding \$50 million is to be earmarked for agriculture to help farmers throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, when we are at the point where farmers, not only in Abitibi, Rouyn, Val-d'Or and La Sarre, but in all the province of Quebec, leave their homes in winter to work as lumbermen in Abitibi and in northern Ontario, we wonder why. But it is to earn money, because the farm does not give them enough for their living.

The minister does not speak about that. I see the member for Charlevoix; he has the same problems in his riding. There is not a single member here, who has rural areas in his riding, who does not face the same conditions, the same problems. We spend our time trying to find out the poor among the agricultural class. For 20 years, we have known that agriculture is poor, we have heard about poor farmers.

We are presented a program establishing at not more than \$50 million the amount to wage war against poverty. His Eminence Cardinal Léger said it on television: We have been talking about the poor and poverty for a long time and yet nothing is done to relieve