

Farm Credit Act

On account of this increase in the funds made available to the Farm Credit Corporation, we have the opportunity to bring about, through appropriate advertising, a considerable increase in the number of applications for loans from the east.

Our farmers are not asking for special treatment; they merely want to be treated like first class citizens of the confederation.

They are entitled to a fair share of the national budget, and that is what I claim for them.

In the last few years, agriculture has certainly lost some of its relative importance in eastern Canada as a result of intensive industrial development. Nevertheless, it still remains the cornerstone of our economy and deserves enough consideration by the government to have a minister of agriculture appointed for eastern Canada.

(Text):

Mr. Mather: The constituency which I represent has within its boundaries many farms and many types of farming operation. In addition to fruit farms there are vegetable farms, poultry farms and dairy farms. With regard to the latter, and on their behalf, I was glad yesterday that the government came out to say a word of praise for the cows of Canada. It was in regard to their suggested implication with the strontium fallout situation. The Minister of National Health and Welfare said that while cows and milk had been mentioned in connection with strontium tests, this should not be regarded as evidence that milk was strontium prone. It just happens to be one of the liquids chosen by the experts when they are investigating strontium fallout. I think it would have been more appropriate to have chosen some other fluid in this connection; perhaps beer, whisky or vodka might have been more to the point. Nevertheless, as I say, I was glad that the government has given the cows of Canada a good word.

The fact is that the Canadian cow has a moral and spiritual as well as a material value in our economy. In my riding, as is probably the case in others across Canada, it is the cow that brings or keeps the farmer at home in the late afternoon. The farmer is home because he has to be there to milk the cow. The same cow gets him to bed early in the evening, unlike city executives who, I am told, often frequent nightclubs and similar establishments until a late hour. The farmer is in bed early because he knows he has to get up again early in the morning to milk the same cow. So, in my riding at least, it is the cow which is keeping the farmer of Canada on the straight and narrow path. I might say in passing that it would not be a bad idea I think sometimes if we had a

few cows here on parliament hill. Let me say in this regard that I think too many of the farmers in my constituency will not—

Mr. Chatterton: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Mather: Yes.

Mr. Chatterton: Is the hon. member implying that the farmers who do not have cows are not on the straight and narrow path?

Mr. Mather: No; I do not imply that. However, I still think that the cow might help many farmers.

With regard to the legislation which is before us let me say seriously that while we in our party support it for what it is and as far as it goes, yet I am afraid it is not going to do much to solve the problems of the farmers, at least not those in my part of the country. Too many of the farmers there are paying excessively high prices for feed, fertilizer and other things they need in their production. Feed prices have risen \$20 a ton in one year. On the other hand they have unstable markets with resulting insecurity. When they have a good crop they do not know where they can sell it or what the price is going to be. United States farm produce is being brought into the market in British Columbia in competition with our home grown produce in large quantities at presumably low prices; but, Mr. Chairman, these low prices seem to be very seldom passed on to the consuming public. At the same time the low priced United States produce keeps down the prices to our British Columbia farmers. Carrots are a good example. A farmer may get two cents a pound for B.C. carrots but California carrots are selling for 15 cents a pound. This is a big price spread. One direct result of all this is the decline in the farm population. According to the dominion bureau of statistics the farm population of British Columbia in 1961 was 77,540 compared to one of 109,919 in 1951. Much of the loss in this farm population has occurred in the lower Fraser Valley. What is needed as well as lending legislation for the farmers, as I know them, is more and better legislation, the enforcement of the Combines Investigation Act and the taxation of excess profits. We need also established guaranteed floor prices under farm produce. The farmers also need a reduction in the taxes on their land.

I was very much interested last evening to hear the second in command of the Social Credit party say, in relation to the farm loan legislation that money was not everything, that not everything could be accomplished by money; that the farmers might get the loans but they might be worse off as a result of it; and that what was needed basically was more guaranteed price legislation to sell produce