

Farm Credit Act

Mr. Chairman, like the member for Norfolk (Mr. Roxburgh) I would like the act to apply to our farmers who are engaged in specialized farming.

I have the honour of representing, in this house, a huge constituency of over 110,000 persons. Allow me to greet them, as I bring you their message of understanding and good will. Four thousand of them live on Jesus island which is aptly referred to as the "garden of Quebec". Over 40 young men have started working on specialized farms this year, following the 150 who had done the same, before them, in the last five years.

I envy the hon. member for Nicolet-Yamaska who managed to secure so much—either him or his predecessor—from this federal agency. Many of my constituents submitted requests which have gone unanswered.

An hon. Member: To the provincial government or federal government?

Another hon. Member: To both.

Mr. Rochon: To both. Those applications had been made mostly to the federal government, but they were turned down by the Department of Agriculture.

An hon. Member: You mean the provincial government.

Mr. Rochon: Mr. Chairman, this afternoon you heard the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte). He described the treatment given farmers in his constituency, and what goes on in his constituency is common to all eastern farmers; small farmers who have worked hard to achieve certain results are too often placed in a position where they can no longer face competition, where they cannot meet their obligations and where they have to abandon the fruit of several years of work.

Speaking here on behalf of the farmers, gardeners and market gardeners of my district, I associate myself with the Catholic Farmers' Union which claims that the agricultural class has come this year to a turning point of its history in the province of Quebec. They realize that in order to obtain results, they must join into a professional association of farmers, into a powerful association, counting, of course, on federal and provincial help. I therefore wonder if the bill that will be submitted to us will allow the small farmers to take advantage of it.

At present in order to grant them a loan, the Farm Credit Corporation asks for collateral. Now how can collateral be given by the gardeners of my county, by the market

[Mr. Rochon.]

gardeners of Jesus island, when they have to spend thousands of dollars to prepare the soil, lay out their hot houses and prepare their hotbeds. If even they were sure of selling their produce and did not fear American competition as happened this year. The same situation exists for the dairy farmers, feed producers, in a word, for all our eastern farmers. We are taking care of the western farmers very well, but those in the east also have rights, I believe, which have been overlooked for the last five years.

And yet, Mr. Chairman, the economists of the federal Department of Agriculture are the ones who wrote in a report published in September 1961 that: If emergency steps are not taken immediately in addition to certain subsidies granted either by Quebec or Ottawa, many small eastern farmers, particularly in Ontario and Quebec, will face bankruptcy.

It is time, it is high time that such things are said. Please remember, Mr. Chairman, I am inspired in making such remarks only by my desire to serve my riding, my province and my country.

I do not indulge in petty politics. I wish that we could say like those new Canadians who arrive from Europe and elsewhere: "Now we will see a country where it is good to live and where governments are aware of their civic duty".

It is the first time I have the opportunity of taking the floor in this house and I am proud to do so on behalf of the agricultural classes. They are a minority in my large constituency, but a minority which is an honour to us, a minority which brings the name of our farmers to the far end of Europe, since at the Canadian pavilion of the world's fair held in Belgium a few years ago, where there were demonstrations of vegetable and fruit growing, two gardeners of my constituency were present. In fact, the following year, their early products, be it tomatoes, cucumbers or lettuce, were considered as class A products at American fairs.

If those people can so bear the name of Quebec, the name of our country abroad, let us help them. Let us make credit easier to get than is the case at present.

May I, Mr. Chairman and hon. members, thank you for your kind attention.

It is the first time I have had the honour of taking the floor here, and I shall never forget it.