

Supply—Agriculture

Mr. Chairman, if you refer to page 37 of the estimates, you will see the following breakdown of the various grants.

Community pastures—\$1,375,000.
Irrigation projects, southwestern Saskatchewan—\$243,000.
Re-settlement and land use.

We could get something out of that also, but the amount indicated is nil.

Supply, equipment and service depot—\$728,000.
Bow River irrigation project—\$976,000.
St. Mary's irrigation project—\$357,000.
South Saskatchewan river project—\$1,274,000.
Buffalo Pound lake reservoir—\$90,000.

That was only meant to give you an idea of what the province of Quebec gets since the implementation of those famous joint plans.

To supervise the good administration of this act, the department appointed what they call credit advisers, supervisors and all kinds of inspectors or assessors.

It seems to me that some do not do the job for which they get paid by the minister. According to the act, the credit advisor must try to find out the best solution, in order to enable a farmer to live better on his farm, to give the proper advice which will enable the farmers who own one, two or even three farms to stay on them.

I do not think it is the responsibility of the loan adviser to tell a farmer who owns a herd of 40 or 45 milkers or three lots of the best possible farm land, to sell his farm and move to the city.

I do not know whether some employees of the department act thus through lack of local knowledge, a wrong interpretation of the act or a partisan preconceived policy, but I was amazed by some decisions or some procedures taken by those employees of the corporation.

Therefore, I am asking the Minister of Agriculture to make a serious survey in the province, and especially in the riding of Roberval, in order to find out what is wrong, whether it is the personnel in charge of the administration of the act or the act itself.

For the time being, I will not accuse anybody in particular, but I would like the minister to personally look into this specific case and to make a survey in my constituency, with the help of people who have nothing to do with those who work there today. You are bound to admit that the main purpose of the corporation is to make loans so that more farmers will keep or buy lands on which they will be able to lead a decent and secure life.

For that purpose, your department appoints credit advisers to determine the possibility

[Mr. Gauthier.]

of granting loans to farmers who wish to modernize their equipment. Now, in my constituency—for I do not know what is going on in other ridings—it seems that the inspectors endeavour to find reasons not to loan money to farmers.

Do you want evidence? Out of almost 1,500 projects, barely 100 were accepted.

We pay a staff of four or five people or even more, to turn farmers down.

I wonder if the department watches the work closely enough. I shall say nothing of the touristic trips of some small appraisers, of some high officials and even of people from the Quebec office who go about their business accompanied by their wives. If a farmer does not own a modern house, he is denied a loan; again, some farmers have friends who wish to buy their neighbour's land to extend their farms and, consequently, advise those farmers, who have been established for 50 years to leave their land. I have to press, once more, for serious investigation to be made in my riding where you might discover some pretty sights.

To conclude, I wish to point out that the general work of the investigators does not help at all the development of agriculture as a whole.

They tell us: Yes, but it is better than in previous years when barely a hundred loans were made throughout the province. If you consider the increase in salaries paid today in that field, it makes you wonder if 1,500, 1,600 or even 2,000 farm loans in Quebec represent even a step forward, because in the small province of Saskatchewan only, more than 2,500 loans are granted each year.

Mr. Minister, some of your employees, when they are working, are satisfied with very little in the field of agricultural direction. And some even have the nerve to tell us, when some farmers, who are tired of waiting, complain to us: a member has no business here, he should stay in his office.

I feel that the first duty of a member of parliament is to make sure that the funds put at the disposal of each department are properly used. In other words, Mr. Chairman, I would be greatly remiss if I did not keep my eyes open in my riding.

It is also the responsibility of a member to look for any waste even on the part of the Department of Agriculture officials and to wage a relentless war on patronage both bureaucratic and political. No one can blame a member of parliament for doing that.

If the elected representative of the people does not have the right to seek justice for a farmer wronged by employees who are not