

Rural Development

Before closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like to give the following warning. The electoral map which was hotly discussed in the house some time ago will soon be changed. The new boundaries will be in force at the next election which means that the farmer is in danger of losing his voice. Representatives of rural constituencies will gradually disappear with the new electoral map. I do not mean to question the necessity of the new boundaries which will affect every constituency in the country, but I observe one thing and, as a result, I am giving the necessary warning. It is that the farmer is in danger of losing his mouthpiece; his voice is in danger of being stifled precisely because the new electoral map will make urban constituencies out of the greatest majority of constituencies represented in parliament. Rural constituencies are condemned to elimination and, as a result, the voice of the farmer is in danger of being neglected and unheard.

That is why such legislation is so important, so that members, even though they represent largely urban ridings, will continue to be actively and efficiently concerned with the farmers.

[English]

Mr. J. H. Horner (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in the debate on Bill C-151 I should like to preface my remarks by stating that as a member representing a constituency which lies in the semi-arid area of east central Alberta I have watched the progress of the ARDA program since its inception in 1961. The new conception of ARDA which has come into effect since 1963 has been of interest to me and my constituents. We have looked upon this program as one which could mean much to us in the years ahead. Since 1963 it has been redirected from a war on underdeveloped resources to a war on poverty. However, as someone once said, this is not a war on poverty; it is an exercise in shadowboxing.

If under this new bill it is proposed to redirect aid provided through ARDA toward the government's war on poverty one must ask how it coincides with other government legislation. We have been told that a new agency will be set up under this new legislation to buy out small, uneconomic farm units and enlarge them into larger economic units which can be operated efficiently. I hope that in at least some cases the enlarged units will be sold back to individual farmers.

[Mr. Choquette.]

In essence the operation of such an agency will put the government into the business of purchasing real estate and operating farms. What effect will this have on the price of land, which is already skyrocketing to a point that cannot be justified on the basis of the potential value of production? What effect will this have on agriculture generally?

Members of political parties have been travelling across this country for years proclaiming that we must maintain the family farm; yet we find ourselves faced with a bill which would establish what might be termed state farms. It is very interesting to note in this regard that we in Canada have operated more efficiently and outproduced the Soviet Union; yet the Soviet Union has been operating a system of state farms. One could carry on comparing the advantages and disadvantages of the two systems of production and come to no other conclusion than the one I have drawn, that in spite of the problems we have in our system it is better and more efficient than the state farm system.

The proposed legislation is put forward under the guise of making war on poverty by aiding small uneconomic farm units. Let us consider that proposition for a moment. I do not deny that there are a number of small farms in Canada with low incomes but the proposed method of assistance is not the only way this situation can be changed. I should like to suggest a few alternatives.

In those areas of Canada where uneconomic farm units exist educational courses could be provided. A farmer who finds himself operating an uneconomic unit has two avenues open to him. He can acquire a better education through one means or another, through grants, if necessary, or by taking advantage of educational programs introduced by the federal and provincial governments in order that he may know how to produce more efficiently, or he can borrow money to enlarge his unit and intensify his production. As an example of what I have in mind, one does not need virgin land with heavy black soil to produce hogs, beef or poultry efficiently. The farmer can intensify his production without enlarging his farm unit to any great extent. I suggest these are methods which can be followed in our efforts to eradicate the poverty pockets existing in Canada.

• (5:00 p.m.)

This legislation introduces a new approach, one in which the government singles out areas in Canada and says that because areas