

*Farm Loans*

Canada. Everyone knows that the Okanagan produces the best fruit in Canada and that it is the best fruit growing area.

Hon. members may not know that we also have grain farms, forage farms and tree farms. We produce some of the best grapes and make some of the best wine in this country. We even have nut farms. I can assure this House, however, that we are not talking about the kind of nuts produced in other parts of Canada; I am talking about the kind of nuts we eat. This bill is very important to the people of Okanagan North and to all Canadians. I am very glad to see that with this bill and with the Canagrex legislation, which will be discussed tomorrow, the government has finally started something positive. I would be the first to commend the government for doing that. The minister has said in bringing this bill before the House that Canadian agriculture must be assured of a constant and sufficient supply of long-term credit if it is to meet the goals set for its agri-food strategy.

I have looked far and wide for any strategy, and I mean good strategy from this government in the agricultural industry, whether its produce is for home use or export. I will have something more to say about that later on. The bill itself is positive. It seeks to encourage and assist the production of agriculture. Together with Canagrex, this bill will help to rationalize the export of food from this country. It broadens the scope of the Farm Credit Corporation. Capital is increased from \$150 million to \$225 million, which given the 25 times roll-over, allows for about a \$5.6 billion line of credit. Furthermore, it allows the corporation to go to the private market. While it is not perfect, I would endorse the comments of the hon. member for Huron-Bruce (Mr. Cardiff)—and I hope this matter will be brought up again in committee—that there should be a regulation that only resident farmers are entitled to borrow money under the act.

● (1610)

The hon. member mentioned foreigners buying land in Canada. I realize that must be controlled at the provincial level but certainly in the Okanagan it is a big problem. We have foreigners paying very high prices for very good land, because it is a nice place to live. However, they do not live on the land; therefore its productivity is down.

Now, I said earlier that this is the first positive thing this government has done in two years. I have sat here for just over two years and seen nothing but negative and punitive legislation. In fact, there was a time when I thought the government's whole purpose was to savage Canadians. First of all, we had the energy crisis and this government's energy policy. All it succeeded in doing was to ruin what at one time was a very good industry in western Canada, Mr. Speaker. The drilling and associated service industry has virtually disappeared because of this government's policies. That really hurt western Canadians.

The second bit of legislation in another direction was also negative. The government made it impossible for most people to communicate by mail because of the high cost of postage. It stopped most of the rail passenger activity in western Canada,

and altogether had a very negative impact on transportation and communications.

The third attack on the country was the too high interest rates. They have affected everyone, and most certainly the farm population. When I was home over the holidays I spent a lot of time talking to farmers and business people, and high interest rates was the main topic of conversation. One farmer in particular said he was in danger of losing his farm. He reminded me of the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act and asked me to see if it was still in effect. Now, there are perhaps many in this House not old enough to remember the thirties; you might, Mr. Speaker, and I do, but it was a very, very difficult time for farmers, not only because of a lack of markets but because of failed crops, bad weather and dust storms. In fact, we used to call them the dirty thirties.

However, it was the Bennett government at that time, a Conservative government, which brought in an act that made it possible for farmers on the verge of bankruptcy to come to terms with their creditors, and if they could not the courts were empowered to force an agreement on the farmers and their creditors. This farmer said that he saved his land at that time because of the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act. He has farmed that land for 40 years because of that act; he has been productive, and I am sure his story can be repeated many times in western Canada.

This farmer asked me, why can we not do something like that now? Well, I think that is the kind of forward-looking legislation that this government should be bringing forth. Hopefully they will; hopefully Bill C-88 and the Canagrex bill mark a change in the government's direction. Certainly in the past 15 years it has not shown any real strategy for agriculture. Everyone, Mr. Speaker, who has spoken to this bill has emphasized the need to protect the farming operation because, over the long term, I think most Canadians will agree it is absolutely essential.

I want to talk now about what has happened to Canada in relation to the farming community, agricultural production and exports in general, because both these bills address that question. I read recently an article in the January, 1979 issue of the *Chelsea Journal* which identified the result of this government's failure to have a national policy of agricultural production and export. It said that as a nation we can produce our own breakfast, but we must send out for lunch and dinner. That is a very apt way of saying we have failed. We can produce only our breakfast; if we want lunch or dinner we have to go outside the country and buy it.

By the year 2000 Canada will be a net importer of every food with the exception of grains, oilseed, milk and eggs. We will be making our breakfast but nothing else. That is a sad commentary on a country which was once a great agricultural producer. The article goes on to say that Canada is an underdeveloped country where agricultural trade is concerned. That was a surprise to me, Mr. Speaker. I had not heard the word "underdeveloped" in relation to Canada for a long, long time.