

Farm Credit Act

Of course, it is necessary to offer greater advantages, more facilities to our small eastern farmers in order that they could take advantage of the act, and also intensify publicity in order to show that the Ottawa government is looking after them.

Those are, Mr. Chairman, the few remarks I wished to make on the Farm Credit Act we are now considering.

A moment ago, I heard the hon. member for Nicolet-Yamaska (Mr. Vincent) and his friends from the Union Nationale. I would have liked eastern farmers, those of Nicolet-Yamaska for instance, to hear their Conservative member publicly display his misunderstanding of the federal farm credit legislation. If he is a farmer himself, he is the more so inexcusable, when he says that the present federal legislation helps small farmers. He should make a personal investigation in his constituency or in mine. Not an investigation among the Tories but an impartial investigation among farmers. He would realize that eastern farmers are forgotten by the present government, and he would be convinced farm credit does not help adequately ordinary farmers.

Mr. Latulippe: Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank the government for what has been done up to now concerning loans granted to farmers through the corporation and the Department of Agriculture.

I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Hamilton) for having given us the opportunity to amend this legislation, so that it can be better suited to the needs of the farmers.

In the county which I have the honour of representing, most of the farmers complain bitterly of the fact that the government takes too much time in deciding whether a loan shall be granted or not, and they wonder why the corporation does not make the payment immediately after the application is approved. In fact, some farmers have to wait several months after the decision is taken.

Mr. Chairman, it is almost impossible for the small farmer to take advantage of this measure. The loans are based on an area of 50 acres of land well developed for farming operation. How can the small farmers, with only a few acres of developed land, extend their unit if they are not given the means to accomplish this? I, therefore, suggest that the responsible farmer should be allowed to take advantage of the act, so that he can make a living out of the income from his farm and be a real farmer at home, and not abroad.

[Mr. Matte.]

Half of the farmers from my county are working in the United States or elsewhere since they are not able to make a living out of the income from their farms.

The condition of agriculture is pitiful, as 75 per cent of the farmers of my riding very well know. In the last ten years or so, nearly 50 per cent of our farmers have left their farms; we are facing a state of emergency.

However, it must be known that the farmer is the foundation stone on which rests the structure of our social organization. Should the foundation of the building crumble, the whole society will topple.

Mr. Chairman, we conducted an inquiry in my riding with a group of small farmers to find out how much farmers earn per hour, on the average, when the work performed by all the members of the family is included. We came to the conclusion that the owner-operator of a farm would get as little as four cents per hour.

That is a real shame, Mr. Chairman. That is the reason the farmers are no more able to keep their boys on the farm, because everybody knows that farmers' sons are leaving the homestead where they were born.

Farmers are working 15 hours a day in order to be able to survive and not to take on more liabilities, and that because their income is inadequate. It is inconceivable that in this twentieth century, which is a century of progress, no greater consideration is shown to those to whom we owe our very life. The majority of our farmers live in units which are no more comfortable than those of their cattle. That is the reason for the massive destruction of farming in my riding.

Therefore I suggest that the amendment provide loans for all farmers—for the smallest as well as the biggest—so that they may have the financial facilities they need to maintain their families in comfort and, by this very fact, have a right to buy the mechanization required for the efficient operation of their farm, and at a reasonable price. They should, moreover, have the privilege to enjoy the lowest interest rate, that is a rate not higher than the carrying charges.

The government should not have to levy taxes on the other classes of society to pay interest to financiers. The Bank of Canada is at our disposal, as the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) said.

The hon. member told us that the Bank of Canada printed and controlled all this