

Farm Credit Act

the officials of Farm Credit Corporation, the required guarantees to repay the loan which they would otherwise be granted.

As a result, practically only those who operate larger farms, with modern and appropriate equipment, may qualify for loans from the corporation.

Last year, the total amount a farmer could borrow was increased to \$27,500, no consideration being given to the smaller farmer who might want a loan from \$5,000 to \$6,000 to free himself of those loan companies which ask 18, 20 or even 24 per cent interest.

Those excessive limitations are in no way justified, because the farmer is an experienced businessman who meets his obligations in an exemplary way.

Indeed, as the hon. member for Assiniboia pointed out, over 99 per cent of those who were granted loans under the Farm Credit Act are meeting their obligations.

It is obvious, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister of Agriculture does not know the problems of our farmers. But the figures I just quoted should be food for thought for him and incite him to adjust his policy so as to eliminate the blatant discrimination against our eastern farmers.

The second reason for which our farmers do not benefit from this act as they should, is the fact that the advantages offered by the Farm Credit Corporation did not receive enough publicity.

Our farmers do not know that legislation and I received proof thereof, on several occasions in the last two years I practised my profession, and in a still more striking manner since I became a member of parliament for my riding.

I have here, in many hand, a well made publicity folder showing up the advantage of that legislation and the way it works. The first edition of that publication goes back to June 1961. Yet, no way has as yet been found to distribute it among farmers for whom it is intended.

During the last session, a copy of that publication seems to have been handed to each hon. member, and, at this time, it is only sent to those who are asking for a loan. But the farmer should have this pamphlet in hand before asking for a loan, as it would acquaint him with the very existence of this act, and inform him that he might qualify for a loan and, lastly, it would indicate to him how to obtain it.

[Mr. Drouin.]

That pamphlet, should—and I am stressing the point to the Minister of Agriculture—be sent to all rural post offices in this country to be added to the mail of every farmer, so as to make all needed information available to him.

The minister had his photograph printed on the first page of that folder. Surely it was not for the benefit of his colleagues, as we all have the opportunity of seeing him in person, of looking at the original in this house, from time to time. But the eastern farmers never had the pleasure of seeing him in person; they would be happy to see at least his picture, from time to time.

During the fiscal year 1961-62, the corporation received five official applications for loans from farmers in my riding of Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes. Three were accepted, two rejected.

These figures do not take into account, however, the applications that were made through the former Conservative member and never reached the corporation.

In that connection, I learned with satisfaction last week that the inspector who fell in with the former member's petty political manoeuvres which I condemned in the house last October 4, has been replaced in our district. I thank those who took that very wise decision and I trust that the new inspector will show himself equal to the task entrusted to him and will fill his post conscientiously.

I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that if our farmers were aware of the advantages of the federal farm loans, the corporation would receive many more requests from the province of Quebec, all the more so since the government of that province passed at its last session a law providing for the refund of half the interest charged by the corporation. That law passed by Mr. Lesage's government will undoubtedly make federal loans much more attractive.

If that advertising pamphlet issued by the Farm Credit Corporation were distributed to our farmers, we would see a considerable increase in the number of applications for loans.

I would not like it if my representations on behalf of the eastern farmers were taken to be directed against the western farmer.

I have said in a previous speech, and I repeat it, I am not jealous of the advantages that the western farmers enjoy. On the contrary, I welcome sincerely any measure that ensures their prosperity, because their prosperity benefits indirectly the whole population of the country.