

*Bankruptcy Act*

the province of Quebec. Everything in that province has become centralized in Montreal and Quebec City and the people of the rural sections are suffering as a result.

Here we have an opportunity to decentralize, not by some pious expression of opinion but by some definite action. Give to the small towns and rural districts of Quebec and the other provinces the opportunity of dealing with their own affairs, which concern the people residing in that vicinity. I repeat that this would be a very good opportunity to say that when a bankruptcy occurs in a rural section of Quebec where a judicial district has been established, everything in connection with that bankruptcy should be dealt with by the court of that district, instead of having the whole thing transferred to the city of Montreal or the city of Quebec. Let us give the small centres some say in the administration of their own affairs, and we will make them more attractive to live in. Let us keep in those small centres the activities that should be kept there.

Let me say a word with regard to our lawyers. At the present time the life of a lawyer in a small community in the province of Quebec is impossible. He cannot make a living because everything has been transferred to the cities of Montreal or Quebec. Before long the lawyers practising in the small centres of my province will have to move to Montreal, which will mean that the population of the large cities will be increased and the rural sections of the province will be deprived of what is their due. We can get nothing in the rural sections of Quebec. Railway rates are against us; financial organizations are against us; under our banking system everything is being centralized in the big centres and the rural sections are losing their importance to a very large extent.

I think this practice is contrary to the speeches we have heard here and there in support of the back to the land movement. There is nothing to induce people who live in large cities to go on the farms. They would have to go empty handed; everything in which they are concerned and all their interests are located in the big cities. They can live in the country, but if they want something done they must go to Montreal or Quebec, or if they live in Ontario they must go to Toronto, and I believe the same thing applies in the other provinces. It is about time we made a serious effort to revive the rural sections of the country, more particularly in the province of Quebec.

I hope I may be pardoned by you, Mr. Chairman, and by the committee for speak-

[Mr. Cardin.]

ing at such length. I have had this matter in mind for a long time, and this is not the first time I have expressed these sentiments. I think we should do something more practical than make speeches advocating the back to the land movement; we should do something to induce the people to go back on the land, and we should also try to keep on the farms those who are already there. What I said in regard to lawyers applies also to all the other professions and trades. Let me say just here that the lawyers in the rural sections are much better than their reputations would lead people to believe. In the small communities of our province they enjoy a very great deal of respect; in fact a large number of our rural constituencies are represented, both in legislatures and in this parliament, by lawyers and professional men. These are gentlemen of some importance in their localities, and they should not be driven away from their homes and the districts in which they have practised. They should be left to deal with the business arising in the locality in which they live; they deserve some consideration.

Mr. GUTHRIE: I have listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Richelieu with regard to the bill now under consideration, which proposes the amendment of certain sections of the Bankruptcy Act. To some extent I am in agreement with the views expressed by my hon. friend, yet on the whole I cannot say that I am in accord with his opinions.

I agree with the hon. gentleman that the question of bankruptcy and the administration of bankruptcy laws in the Dominion of Canada presents very great difficulties. Some of us will remember that as far back as 1876 the first act of the kind was passed by this parliament, known at that time as the Insolvency Act. After that act had been in operation for some six or seven years it was repealed, and the question of bankruptcy, as it came under the jurisdiction of this parliament, was altogether removed from our statute books. We had at that time seven provinces in Canada and each of them attempted in its own way to pass some law to meet the situation. We had no dominion bankruptcy or insolvency law and, as I say, each province attempted to enact laws of its own to meet the situation. There was a great deal of variation in the provincial laws. Afterwards, when we admitted two new provinces, they, of course, deemed it proper to attempt likewise to occupy what was federal jurisdiction by passing insolvency laws of their own. So that eventually we found ourselves