

Act to grant credits for the development of mortgaged lands owned by a secondary non-farming enterprise, the Corporation is not authorized to take into consideration any possible non-farming income derived from the farm in assessing the value of the land for the purpose of calculating the amount of the loans.

Therefore, an amendment will make it possible to take such factors into consideration in future, which means that we shall be able to increase the basis for the calculation of the amount of a loan, which is assessed at 75 per cent of the land yield. But in restricting the items which could be included in the cost benefit analysis, you obviously reduce loan possibilities and limit the maximum loans to be granted to farmers. By including other forms of income under this amendment, we shall enable farmers to qualify for larger amounts even on the basis of as restricted a unit.

There is another very important point, Mr. Speaker. In my opinion, it may be the most important of all. It is the removal of the age limit. Under the present act, one must be 21 years of age to apply to the Farm Credit Corporation for a loan. From now on, this age limit will be eliminated, and the age of majority prevailing in each province will apply. In some provinces, majority is at the age of 18, in others you reach majority at 19. In those provinces where the coming of age has not changed yet, the age limit will necessarily remain the same as is now prevailing in those provinces, that is, 21 years.

This will enable young farmers to obtain loans and to go into farming with their fathers or other people, or to invest and start in that field. This of course will not solve the problem which the young people are facing at the present time when they want to start farming. If they have no capital, it remains difficult, but through that amendment, we will surely make it easier for them and the number of young farmers who will definitely choose that calling and who will become owners will certainly increase. I am convinced of that, having met young farmers. Incidentally I would like to say to those who take a gloomy view of agriculture that after having heard all those criticisms, it is not surprising that they take such gloomy views. Recently, I attended a meeting where a group of farmers of my constituency were discussing farming problems. Unfortunately, I must admit it, the 50 or 60-year olds were rather pessimistic. However, four young men had remained silent throughout the evening. At the end of the evening, I asked them if they had no views to express, which they did. To my great surprise and satisfaction, of the four young men, aged 22 to 26, three were owners of their farms, and the fourth one worked on his father's farm. They all told me that they were very hopeful and happy to be engaged in agriculture, and that they would not change for another trade. They said "We see our relatives, our friends, who went to school and who today are stuck in the industrial society. We much prefer our trade of farmer, and we entertain great hopes for the future because we have a future to build, whereas our parents, who lived through difficult periods, recall the past and their difficulties instead, and have not, of course, many years ahead of them to build. They are rather pessimistic."

That pleased me and I can assure hon. members that they are not the only ones to see farming as a promising

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career in the future. Agriculture does have a future, and more and more young people will join the ranks of farmers and follow those who now live off the farm.

Here, I should warn those who take as sole basis the average age of active farmers. It is said that the average age of farm workers and farm owners in Canada is around 55 years. Obviously, such a situation is alarming, and justly so, but one forgets that, in this very special industry, often the son succeeds to the father or is presently employed by the father. The latter is the owner and he is the one who is considered when establishing the average age of the active farmer. But if we consider that his son, aged 22, 23 or 27 years, works with him in most cases and if we figure out the average age of the two persons occupied in agriculture, we soon realize that the average age is, in fact, much closer to 35 than to 55. That gives us greater confidence and allows us to consider the situation in a much more objective way.

Mr. Speaker, we hear criticisms of all kinds. Opposition members were saying earlier that the agricultural situation was disastrous. When considering statistics and various reports we can no doubt draw many conclusions. I can come to one, for instance, in reading the 1970-71 report of the Canadian Wheat Board. In Table No. 3, on page 3, dealing with the volume of grain products in the Prairies over the years, it is sure that I can come to a strange conclusion, for what it is worth, but one may that conclusion. Our colleagues opposite are drawing the very same kind of conclusion. According to a table, at the time the Conservatives were in power from 1957 to 1961 here is what happened. In 1956, the total grain production reached 1,202 million bushels. But, unfortunately, it happened that the Conservatives were in office during the seven lean years and here is what happened between 1957 and 1962: the production dropped from 1,202 million bushels to 784 million in 1957, then it went up to 824 million bushels in 1958, to 854 million bushels in 1959, to 970 million bushels in 1960, and dropped to 524 million bushels in 1961. A real record! This includes all grains. It is to be noted that there were only 260 million bushels of wheat. That happened at the time when the "Prairie experts", those who are in the opposition, who criticize the government, were in office for some time. If we consider their record, Mr. Speaker, we find it far from good!

In 1971, we have the highest figures ever reached in the last 25 years: 1,563 million bushels of grain were produced. Those are official figures.

Are conditions so bad in the Prairie provinces? Not as bad as that, but, of course, not as good as we would like them to be. I am sure the Minister of Agriculture is the first to wish the situation would be much better, and I am sure all members of the Liberal party as well as those of the opposition agree with him. Let us be realistic. To paint the situation in black as is now being done does not serve the profession in which they are engaged. Mr. Speaker, I blame them because their attitude, their constant criticisms about the agricultural situation tends to downgrade the profession in which they are engaged, as well as the people they claim to represent. As for me, I say the opposite: The situation is not perfect, but it is definitely better than the one depicted by members of the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, through the bill that we shall pass in a few days with the co-operation of all members, we shall cer-