

Local Oxford farm family evicted

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the property's laneway, but said "we're giving up".

"Legally we can not do anything, morally they are dead wrong," said Bonne.

Allan Slater, a neighbour and member of the Rural Life Committee of the United Church, said it was the family's decision.

Slater said the group were prepared to walk onto the property even though half-dozen OPP officers stood guard at the end of the laneway.

"There is a purpose in us going to jail because we know if we don't fight today we fight tomorrow...it's not just something that's being done for you, but for all of us," said Slater.

Slater said there were two choices: to either go home or join together and walk on to the property and get dragged off.

He said the network of farm organizations and individuals prepared to stand ready at farmers defence would have to wage a 24-hour response as lending institutions and police begin using irregular hours to avoid confrontations.

Although the DeBoers were able to renegotiate with CIBC, which enabled them to buy back one farm, Municipal Savings and Loan has refused to talk with them or agree to any kind of an arrangement.

He said they are still not free even with the repossession of the property since the trust company have refused to give the DeBoers their personal releases.

"They are forcing us into bankruptcy. It was something we never wanted to consider before, but they are leaving us with no alternative," stressed Steve.

FDRB No Help

The DeBoers' attempts to go through the Farm Debt Review process were unsuccessful although it did provide an initial 30-day breathing space.

Steve said the trust company wouldn't respond to the board's request to sit down at the bargaining table.

Brian Middleton, a St. Mary's businessman who is on the Farm Debt Review Board panel, was on the scene as a supporter of the family. He said the events show the need for more teeth in the debt review process.

Middleton said that, while debt review has made great process in bringing lenders and farmers together, there is still room for improvement.

"The Farm Debt Review Board is there to negotiate. The problem being with people like Municipal Savings and Loan is they snub their nose at the rest of the world," he said.

Middleton said he believes the trust company was the exception to the rule, and that even unsecured creditors, most major banks and farm credit had displayed a willingness to come to the bargaining table.

The financial difficulties have been hard on the entire family including the couples' children.

Bonne recalled the day the CIBC came to remove machinery and how his grandchildren reacted.

"They said, 'Ompa (Grandfather), they're taking your lawn mower don't let them'. I had a gun loaded, but there was my wife and children. I didn't stop them, but it wasn't an easy decision," Bonne said.

Monica said the family's stand was not just for themselves, but for every farmer going through the same crisis. "We could have walked off and let things go, but it was important to make a point. People have got to start to listen," she said. "We were not into the farm survival before and we still do not advocate violence, but if we have to get arrested to change these indifferent attitudes, so be it."

Steve said the support and help provided by neighbours and friends after the first foreclosures was overwhelming. He said fellow farmers arrived with machinery and offers of assistance so the DeBoers' could plant crop in 1986.