

Farm Machinery

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): I do not wish to get into what I might call the verbal slugging match between the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Hays) and the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Horner). In fact I do not think I would qualify in such a league. But I do want to press the minister to answer the perfectly reasonable suggestion which was made by my hon. friend from Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) and supported by my hon. friend from Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge).

They suggested the minister should indicate that after this bill had received second reading it would be referred to the standing committee on agriculture. It seems to me that this is a reasonable suggestion. Indeed, I cannot imagine anyone refusing it. Such a course would remove doubts about this legislation. It would I think shorten the debate at this stage, and surely the minister desires to shorten debate. He himself complained mildly in his remarks, that I thought were occasionally a little truculent, of lawyers such as the right hon. Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) injecting themselves into a matter that is primarily a concern of farmers. Surely this is a very good reason why this particular matter should be referred to the committee in which most of the members are in fact experienced farmers and can go into this matter. It would be better to do that, and more appropriate, than to refer it to a committee of the whole.

The minister has told us this is a new type of legislation in Canada. If that is so, why should not the members of this house who are on a special standing committee to deal with questions of agriculture have the opportunity to question in a way and bring out things in a way that cannot easily be done in committee of the whole? It seems to me that as a matter of general principle that is a sound procedure. Surely we should be using the committees of this house more than we are doing; and it seems to me to be particularly appropriate to the bill that we are now considering on second reading.

I am no expert in agricultural matters, but I am concerned with questions of liability, responsibility and legislation. It seemed to me that two questions have been raised in this debate which have not been answered by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Hays), or at least not adequately answered by the minister. I know this is not the stage to discuss the different clauses of the bill in detail; however, I think it was the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent) who raised what seemed to me a very serious point that

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

should be discussed, namely the fact that under one of the key clauses of this bill members of the syndicate or partnership are required to sign a promissory note for which they are jointly and severally liable. This may mean the assumption of an obligation with regard to, I think the figure was \$15,000 but it may, for all I know, be more than that for certain types of equipment. The question is raised, and properly raised: Would this affect the creditworthiness of the farmer who joined this syndicate? The minister says it is a simple matter and only farmers can comprehend it. But the question of getting into partnership and assuming liabilities for large sums of money is something that farmers as well as everybody else are well advised to look into carefully and take advice on.

Before I approve this particular aspect of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to hear what bankers would say about this aspect of the signing of a note. I can think of the case where many other members of the syndicate, perhaps ten others, would perhaps only contribute \$1,000 toward the syndicate; but you sign a note for \$20,000. Would that in fact affect the creditworthiness of the farmer? We have not been told anything about this. It is the sort of point that surely could properly be considered in the agriculture committee.

There is another item in the bill that I wish to question. Again, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to discuss the clauses of the bill. The hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) described, in language which I suggest is entirely just and appropriate, the provisions of clause 9 which provide that the governor in council may make regulations defining the key phrases used in this bill. The hon. member for Peace River described that method of legislation as repugnant and objectionable. I second those terms; I suggest it is repugnant and objectionable to ask this house to pass legislation which does not even define the meaning of the key phrases it uses and says, "We will have someone else define them for us later". I suggest that is legislative and parliamentary irresponsibility.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, it would be a very excellent thing if this bill went to the committee on agriculture. I do not profess to know what is the proper meaning of the term "farm machinery". I might not know one piece of farm machinery from another, but I know there are members on the agriculture committee who are well able to provide adequate definitions for the purposes of this bill. Why should they not have the oppor-