

● (5:40 p.m.)

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a possibility that in setting up the regulations this system could be made optional or used at the discretion of the particular farmer concerned. I say this because those farmers who carry on a large enough operation to warrant their needing hired help, perhaps on a year round basis, should be brought in. Some of those who require more than one employee, and are fairly consistent employers of farm labour should be brought in, because usually their operation is large enough that they have to do a great deal of bookkeeping, keeping of records, submitting of reports and so on. Adding the Unemployment Insurance Commission requirements to that kind of operation would probably not be objectionable. But to make it a blanket coverage as it is with other business today would create, I think, a great many problems that would be undesirable.

I should like the government to consider making this system optional in the regulations because I know the government has stated on a number of occasions that it is seriously considering ways and means of bringing agricultural workers within the ambit of the act. As I said, Mr. Chairman, I want to be very, very brief and in conclusion I should like to caution the government that if and when they do introduce this kind of coverage the regulations should not be so extensive and arbitrary that they will cause a great many small operators and part time employers, if I may put it that way, a great deal of difficulty in abiding by them.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question? I should like to ask whether he is not aware of the fact that unemployment insurance stamps can be secured at any post office as required.

Mr. Olson: I am very well aware of that fact, but you cannot buy unemployment insurance stamps at any post office unless you have a licence to buy them. There are very good and sufficient reasons for having to apply for such a licence and for the application book necessary to pick up these stamps at any post office. The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) knows very well that he cannot go to a post office and buy unemployment insurance stamps unless he produces the licence with which to purchase those stamps. The reason is very simple; it is that there would be abuse of the use of these stamps unless there was very strict control on who could buy them.

Unemployment Insurance Act

[Translation]

Mr. Auguste Choquette (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the various contributions to the debate on the bill now under study.

I should like, first of all, to congratulate the hon. member who introduced the bill; his intentions are excellent and his proposal worthy of interest.

Mr. Speaker, the bill, in its present form, reflects the claims, not only of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture but also of the Catholic Farmers' Union, both of which advocated it strongly.

Personally, I came to the house in 1963 and supported and requested such legislation.

I do not wish to minimize the credit of the hon. member who moved the bill, but as I represent an essentially rural riding—there are only villages in the riding of Lotbinière, no towns or cities—I am in a position to understand the nature of our farmers' problems, and more specifically, the problems that arise because the tillers of the soil are not covered by the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Therefore, I fully agree with the principle of this bill. I also agree with the reasons adduced in the preamble of the bill, particularly the marked technological changes that have occurred since the Unemployment Insurance Act came into force; increasing mechanization of our farms and the consolidation of farm units and the fact that a worker owning a smaller farm is likely to disappear for the benefit of those who own larger units.

I believe that all these reasons enlighten us in a special way on the necessity of such a bill.

However, I have listened also to the speech made by the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) and, there, we have food for thought. In my opinion, here is the weakness of the bill: the application provisions of this legislation are certainly not thorough enough for us to pass this bill at once.

In fact, section 3 reads as follows:

(4) No payment shall be made out of the amounts standing to the credit of the unemployment insurance fund in the consolidated revenue fund in respect of unemployment insurance benefits and refunds of contributions for employees in agriculture in excess of and except out of the amounts credited on account of contributions on behalf of insured persons, contributions made by employers of insured persons, and interest earnings of such contributions.

Then I wonder whether the sponsor of this bill made the necessary calculations to see how much this will cost? Does he have