

Bills of Exchange Act

status quo is concerned—brings in a bill that says they are satisfied to give the banks the right to establish a five-day week if and when it is possible to do so. It irritates me to hear a group in the house immediately raise the argument: What about the farmer? Should he not get a five-day week? Certainly he should. But he has to start looking for it.

Mr. MacInnis: There is no bill against it.

Mr. Gillis: No; there is no bill against it.

Mr. Weir: Sometimes the weather is against it.

Mr. Gillis: I am glad to see this legislation brought in. As far as I am concerned I do not think anyone in this country is going to starve. Anyone who has a cheque to cash has five days in the week in which to cash it. The question raised by the hon. member for Portage-Neepawa (Mr. Weir) is a good one. There are sections of the country where this change may cause some dislocation, but I think it is a matter that could be ironed out. I think the bill as affecting the bank employees deserves the commendation of every member of this house, and it should find general acceptance.

Mr. Victor Quelch (Acadia): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) has pointed out, this bill does not institute a five-day week but makes it possible for the banks to institute a five-day week if they so desire. Personally I do not think this is a particularly good time to push for a five-day week, the very time when we are being warned about the dangers of inflation and that the only way to avoid inflation is to increase production. You are certainly not going to increase production by a five-day week, in my opinion. On the other hand I agree that if the workers have better living conditions and better health, they are able to work much better when they are working. But I think the time to fight for shorter hours is at a time when surpluses are appearing and when unemployment is increasing; but that is hardly the situation today.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) said he would like to see the five-day week introduced into all industries so that all workers could benefit. Then the hon. member for Cape Breton South said he would like to see farmers in the same position and he could not see why farmers could not institute a five-day week if they so desired. Of course the majority of farmers are working for themselves. We are not talking about farm labour at the present moment. I am sure those farmers would all like to have a five-day week if they could. But the main

[Mr. Gillis.]

difficulty farmers face today is to get a six-day week. Most of them have to work seven days. I do not say they have to work a full seven days, but they have to work a full six days; and then there is a certain amount of work they have to do on Sunday because cows have to be milked, livestock have to be fed, barns have to be cleaned out, and all that kind of work has to be done. Therefore it is not a question of a five-day week; it is a question of a seven-day week for all those farmers who have livestock. I am not talking about the straight grain farmer.

I thought the hon. member for Kamloops (Mr. Fulton) raised a good point. Saturday is the main business day in the rural areas. Farmers come to town on Saturdays. Since last spring they have had to suffer one great inconvenience. When they want to bring their cream in to ship it, they find that the railway depot is closed. If they want to make sure that their cream goes on the train, they have to get there just as the train comes in and put it on; and they have to be there to accept the empty cream cans. Otherwise the cream is likely to be left there until Monday. They have to be there just when the train comes in. At some points the train comes in late at night or early in the morning. It is extremely inconvenient for a farmer to have to get up at two or three o'clock in the morning in order to be at the depot when the train arrives. The depot is open only five days a week. The farmers have to make arrangements to be there when the train comes in order to get their produce shipped and in order to receive their empty cream cans. Now of course they will have the additional trouble that when they go to town on Saturday they will not be able to do any banking. They will therefore have to rearrange their whole plans and come to town on Wednesday or Thursday. I am not saying that could not be done.

Personally, I do not see how you can introduce a five-day week with regard to farmers, because there is so much work that has to be done. At the present time there is a shortage of labour. It is a difficult job to get enough labour to do the work when you are working six days a week or even seven; but as I said when I started, we are not opposing this bill. We should like to see a five-day week instituted as rapidly as possible. But I suggest that this is not a particularly good time to be pushing it, when everybody is stressing the need for increased production in order to help bring about a reduction in prices.

Mr. L. E. Cardiff (Huron North): Mr. Speaker, I should like to add just a few words to the discussion in connection with this bill. The hon. member for Cape Breton South