

Mr. THOMAS: Would Mr. Robinson say that the processors might be willing to guarantee these payments to producers or set up an organization for this purpose, and would that be preferable to this amendment to the Bankruptcy Act? Would an organization whereby the processors would guarantee these payments to the producers be preferable to an amendment to the Bankruptcy Act which might affect the credit of all processors?

Mr. ROBINSON: I would not be able to answer that question as openly and honestly as I would like until I have discussed it. I would not know.

Mr. THOMAS: In regard to the position of the strength of the producers' bargaining position as against the processors' and bankers' position, and that of others interested in the canning process, would Mr. Robinson say that a farmer who spends his time producing crops rather than on business arrangements and on business technicalities is in as favourable a position in the business world to protect himself against such things as bankruptcy as is a man who spends all of his day and all of his time in a business office dealing with business problems?

If I may depart a little here, I think this is the crux of the matter. Bill C-5 aims to provide protection for a producer on the same basis as protection is provided for a wage earner and as protection is provided for suppliers of building materials under the Mechanics Lien Act. I think we could admit, if I may speak a little on the side, that anything that interferes with the natural economic laws acts as an advantage to some and as a disadvantage to others. The question here is whether the passage of this bill would do us more good through protecting the primary producer than it would do harm through possible restrictions to credit. That is our point and that is why I am asking this question.

Does the witness feel that the producer who spends his time growing crops and not being associated with business has the same chance of protecting himself as the businessman who spends all day in an office and is trained in the field of business?

Mr. ROBINSON: I think all of us who have been in industry any length of time have seen a great many changes. Conditions that applied 20 years ago are quite different from those of today. I think growers are getting fewer in number and bigger in size, that they are more experienced and know their way around a great deal better than the growers of 20 years ago. I think this is good for the grower and I think it is good for the processor. We have always found the grower a pretty hard fellow to negotiate with. We have never found him wet behind the ears, if you want to use that expression. He knew what he was doing. The situations at which we are looking are unfortunate; they are matters about which none of us is happy. I would never have the effrontery to sit here and say that a farmer out in the back concession has the same access to credit information as a man sitting on St. James street or Bay street. Nobody in his right mind could say that. However, I say the information is there for them and it is their duty to find it.

Mr. THOMAS: I have one more question, Mr. Chairman.

Could Mr. Robinson say whether the protection of wages to wage earners, now contained in the Bankruptcy Act, has curtailed credit, and does he feel that the operation of the Mechanics Lien Act, which protects suppliers of building materials when new buildings are erected, has curtailed credit?

Mr. ROBINSON: I would not know. I am not trying to duck the question; I just would not know. You would have to ask someone who has a great deal more knowledge of these things than I.

Mr. THOMAS: I think it is an honest answer, Mr. Chairman. I doubt if anyone knows.