

Bills of Exchange Act

considerations more than do the banks. I am not going into the details, because a lot of research has been done in connection with working hours and conditions of bank employees. I do not know of any employees in the country who, over the years, have worked under tougher conditions than the bank employees. Since the end of the war there has been some relaxation, but I do not think it is a fair analysis of the bill for anyone to suggest that this means the five-day week for bank employees. If there is anything the Department of Finance can do to hurry along the five-day week for bank employees, I believe it should be done. I cannot see how there is going to be any disruption of business in any part of the country because of this bill. As I see it, there is going to be plenty of time to get the five-day week system established in the banks.

On that point of the five-day week, I believe the Department of Labour has to do some serious thinking. With the technological development we have on this continent today, if we ever get the defence program off our hands we are going to have a serious employment problem.

Mr. Weir: That is what they said in 1945, too.

Mr. Gillis: Thank you; I agree with you. We are going to have to do considerable thinking about the revision of the hours of labour if the average person is going to receive any advantage from the technological advances. I compliment the Department of Finance for thinking about relieving the stresses and strains of one section of employees by giving the banks the right to do this if they so desire. It is not mandatory. There is going to be time for reasonable changes in the community where changes are necessary.

Every time someone suggests that there should be changes in the hours of labour, someone hollers that the farmer should have a five-day week. I say he should have it. He should organize for it. I should like to see some farmer get up and put on record the hours that the average farmer works, section by section, across Canada. I do not say that I know. But a forty-hour week for fifty weeks a year, would make 2,000 hours a year. I should like to see some farmer who knows—and I said that I did not—get up and put on the record chapter and verse showing the house and the country that a farmer is actually working at his trade for 2,000 hours a year. I would point out that there are many different kinds of farmers in this country. Just as there is no comparison between a bank employee and a person who

works in a heavy industry, so there is no comparison between mixed farming, machine farming, dairy farming and the various types of farming. But they are all covered under the one heading of farming. As to the suggestion that we reduce the hours of the farmer, the hours of the farmer are made by himself—

Mr. Cardiff: Not necessarily.

Mr. Gillis: Certainly they are.

Mr. Cardiff: They are made by the conditions under which he works.

Mr. Gillis: Do not forget that any worker in this country who today enjoys the eight-hour day, theoretically, in most provinces had to fight for it. They had to fight in order to get those hours. They had to scrap year after year. I do not know what hours the farmer is working. But when you ask for something that is a necessity in this day and age because of technological advance, such as a rearrangement of hours of labour to provide some leisure for those who toil hard in order to get some of the benefits of the machine, I do not think it is good enough that someone who is largely regulating his own hours of work should say: "What about the farmer. If he cuts his hours down, you will starve." I do not believe that. I do not believe I would starve if they all quit. I still have two hands and two feet, and I believe I could rustle up a bite to eat for myself. That is a fairly broad statement to make—

Mr. Cardiff: You would have a great time.

Mr. Gillis: —that the country would starve if someone who is growing grain out in western Canada were to stop.

Mr. Fair: You have to have food before you can get close enough to wrestle with it.

Mr. Gillis: For the benefit of the hon. member for Battle River (Mr. Fair) may I say that the question of whether or not we eat does not depend on the farmer so much as it does on ourselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I must ask him to confine his remarks to a discussion of the principle of the bill.

Mr. Gillis: I just get a little bit tired of listening to these people getting up and saying that someone would starve, making that sort of argument, when you are trying to arrange the hours of labour and when the stiff old Department of Finance—which should be considered the most reactionary department of the government, the department that is sitting tight on the dollar and is supposed to be so immovable as far as the