

Farm Machinery

I understand that referring it to the committee at this stage would be tantamount to killing the bill, and I do not believe the farmers who are in need of this particular assistance would be very happy with any extended delay in the passing of this legislation. If the amendment had been brought in very early in the debate possibly we would have supported it and would have seen some advantage in it. However, at present I believe the people most concerned would be better served by passing the measure, giving time for experiment if necessary, and then bringing in amendments that might be required to make it more effective and more adequate to meet the needs of the agricultural community.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Albert Béchard (Bonaventure): Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to delay indefinitely the passing of this bill, as I know that the farmers are waiting, but I want to say that the cat is now out of the bag.

The amendment that was just submitted by the official opposition, through the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Nugent), would, if passed, kill this bill and the farmers would be deprived of it, which proves once more the strange interest shown by the official opposition for farmers throughout Canada.

Since the beginning of the session the opposition has been claiming on television, in this house and everywhere else that the party in power is doing nothing for the farmers. Just a few minutes ago the hon. member for Berthier-Maskinongé-Delanaudière stated that we should rather be considering the establishment of a true farm policy. Now, the present government has introduced a bill to help the farmers and to facilitate the purchase of farm machinery which has become so costly today. This legislation is especially intended to help our farmers.

No later than yesterday I listened to farmers who told me they were satisfied with this bill introduced by the government. I was also told that the most serious problem which is facing the farmers today, and more particularly the small farmers, is the financial burden of the large investment required to purchase very costly farm machinery.

For instance, a farmer said to me: There are several machines that are used from time to time which farmers could use and pay for more readily if they were grouped together in a syndicate as provided in the bill.

The hon. member for Berthier-Maskinongé-Delanaudière tells us that the family farm is

[Mr. Patterson.]

on its way out. I would ask the hon. member to move with the times, to keep abreast of automation and present-day developments both in agriculture and in the economy as a whole.

At this stage I want to say that I shall vote against the amendment, and, as soon as possible. I urge all the hon. members to give the bill the Minister of Agriculture has submitted their strong support, so that our farmers, and particularly those in the east who need assistance at the present time, may be relieved of the burden that is weighing them down and hindering them from cultivating their lands since to do so they need expensive machines which are a constant burden on their budget, as every year they are obliged to make payments and meet heavy commitments so that in the end their income is \$1,200 or \$1,000, an income that is quite inadequate to maintain a farmer and his family.

One of my colleagues tells me that in the Gaspé peninsula, the Catholic farmers' union has launched a campaign to collect \$50,000 in order to help farmers get the heavy machinery they need nowadays on their farm and which they cannot get individually because their income does not allow them to do so.

In my opinion, this legislation is a step toward the evolution of our agriculture and toward success for our eastern farmers, because it will enable them to get a larger income so that they can support their large families.

Mr. Pierre-André Boutin (Dorchester): Mr. Speaker, I shall take only a few minutes to express my views on Bill No. C-121, now before us.

Just a few minutes ago we heard the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Choquette). I must admit that his speech was rather eloquent and that it reminded me of those he made during the electoral campaign. I note, on the other hand, that what he promised during the electoral campaign he has not yet requested even once in this house, namely, the setting up of a department of agriculture for eastern Canada. Still, he did promise his constituents that, once in Ottawa, he would ask that such a department be instituted. The next time he addresses the house, I should therefore like to ask him to tell the house what he promised during his electoral campaign in this regard.

If the bill we are now studying constitutes a real find for the Department of Agriculture, I must say that in my opinion it is not much of a find. Indeed, the thinking behind this bill does not reflect at all the