

Farm Machinery

bring about the development of our agriculture. I hope that the minister will consider these suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I took part in this debate was to tell the Minister of Agriculture that the eastern farmers, and especially those in the eastern townships, give their unqualified support to his proposed legislation.

[Text]

Mr. Terry Nugent (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid I am not going to agree wholeheartedly with the last hon. member who spoke, who got up ostensibly to congratulate the minister but at the same time pointed out a couple of ways in which he apparently felt there might be room for amendment or improvement in this bill.

I certainly have not risen to condemn the idea that is envisaged in the bill, but I do feel I would like to know a little more about it, and I do feel it is very important that the farmers of this country understand this measure much more fully than they can by just listening to statements such as those made by the hon. member for Norfolk (Mr. Roxburgh).

I am sure there is no one in the house who is not ready, willing, and indeed anxious to do anything he can to help the farmers overcome the cost-price squeeze. We are willing to do everything we can to help them band together in their own interests, and we hope that in considering this one aspect we can work out something that will be most useful to them.

It is not just as a member of the opposition that I have a duty to look at this most critically. My background as a lawyer compels me immediately to look at the signs of trouble—where can the farmer get into trouble on this; where could he be led astray; wherein does this bill fail to achieve in its wording, its concept and its method the objectives which have been so loudly praised on the government side of the house?

I am afraid there are many signs here which indicate to me that the government has approached this from the angle that here is a measure which will, on the face of it, appear so helpful, where we are putting up 80 per cent of the money, where we are able to put such a good face on our desire to help the farmers, that no one will dare stand up and be very critical because he might be taken as anti-farmer. What I have just said, Mr. Speaker, indicates my first criticism of the bill.

[Mr. Asselin (Richmond-Wolfe).]

There has not been sufficient thought put into this measure. It is a piece of show rather than a practical working instrument. It has been presented as a mighty helping hand to the farmer, and there has not been enough frankness with the farmer as to the loopholes or limitations and, in fact, the dangers there are in this system. It is true that farmers at harvest time have learned to co-operate with one another to quite an extent, and I am quite willing to concede that there will be many instances when small groups of farmers, even small groups of small farmers, could see in this bill a chance to band themselves together to buy some machinery, to obtain a degree of financing that they could not obtain individually and that they might not be able to obtain collectively without the assistance of this measure.

However, I think it is only fair to point out that there is nothing to prevent any small group of farmers getting together to form their own syndicate, their own little partnership—because that is what it is—for the purpose of purchasing farm machinery and of financing it in that way. The difficulty is that any partnership—and I would like to use that word instead of “syndicate,” because I think it is the fairest warning to the farmer—carries with it the joint and several liability which is spelled out in this bill, and which is still so little understood by farmers who are not used to business dealings and are not used to forming partnerships.

After listening to the two hon. members who spoke on the Liberal side, particularly the last hon. member who said all his farmer constituents wanted him to thank the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Hays) and praise this bill, I am wondering if any farmers realize when they get into a syndicate, that even though each one puts in only \$1,000—and we will suppose their friends in the syndicate put in a little more, and that 80 per cent of the money they require is borrowed—and they end up with a \$50,000 feed mill or other complex piece of machinery, that each one is responsible for the full \$50,000, despite the investment of only \$1,000.

Does the individual small farmer realize the risks in any partnership involving a great deal of machinery? Does he realize that if the manager of the enterprise makes a mistake and fails to insure properly, or if the machinery should be ruined or lost by some hazard not covered by the insurance, that the partnership is responsible for the full value—not just the money they collectively put in but all the money advanced