

Social Security

come from other countries for a while, as mentioned earlier by the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt), when he told us about those workers from the West Indies who come for a relatively short period of time and then go back home.

On the other hand, if we are to help these sectors of our society, then we might, again consider making changes through more special legislation. Why consider helping students and these people who come from outside the country on a relatively short term basis? Why think of dealing with their problems by a motion which concerns our agricultural industry?

These workers and students work also in other fields here in Canada, and they face the same difficulties. That is why, in my opinion, we should consider helping these people more fully and more generally by means of other amendments.

Before making more concrete comments on this motion, I must say that I was struck by a point made by the sponsor of this motion. He said that the farmers could not keep account books, journals of operations, or deal with other paper work of that sort. I think that we should not be too insistent in asking not only the farmers but the businessmen of the country to deal with that bothersome paperwork. However, I believe—because I know some of them—that there are a great many serious farmers in our country who are capable of adopting an accounting system and keeping books for their operations.

Some of our farmers have a good educational background and are intelligent enough to keep books as well as the neighbourhood grocer or other small traders.

I had the opportunity a few days ago to discuss that motion with some farmers of our region and with some agronomists who are in daily contact with the farmers. Therefore, I can say that in our region in general the farmers are not pleased with that amendment nor the farm workers, I would say. I make no difference between the farm worker and any other worker in my region, and I think the same thing is true everywhere in Canada.

Why make those distinctions? They do not help more that group of citizens we all sincerely want to protect. I think that the basic principle of our government and the party is to try to make of the farmer a first class citizen who will be able to make an income comparable to that of any worker in industry, and our party intends to take the same stand with regard to our farm workers.

[Mr. LeBlanc (Rimouski).]

Here is the opinion of a farmer with whom I discussed that matter last night. He said that the farmer who, in our region, can be considered a big farmer might not be as big compared to others elsewhere in Canada who go in for farming on a larger scale and in more developed areas. In any case, that man can be considered a serious farmer and a big farmer in our region. He told me that, at the present time, the period of 25 days for a total maximum amount of \$250 was considered profitable, for the farmer as well as the worker.

● (5:50 p.m.)

The extension to 40 days would be less advantageous for the farmer. It would be to the advantage of the so-called big farmers. For example, in our area, in the lower St. Lawrence region, we know that the hay season lasts from four to five weeks. After that period of 25 days, the farmer can give unemployment insurance stamps to his workers and get workers, day-labourers more interested in working for him, since 40 day periods are very few indeed in farming in eastern Quebec. The same is true for the harvesting periods. We think that in our area especially, with the new developments which will undoubtedly follow the agreement entered upon between the federal and provincial governments last May, farming will thrive and will profit more from the legislation now in force.

I was discussing that question only yesterday with another man from our region, and he agreed with that. This act concerning the agricultural worker is an exceptional measure, and when it was adopted, we took inspiration from representations and reports made by farming associations.

A period of 40 days. So, many agricultural workers in my region will no longer be insurable. In our area, many farmers who are already registered to take advantage of that legislation will keep on losing interest.

A member of the C.F.U. told me the same thing. He told me that they wanted, in addition, the agricultural workers to be treated like other workers everywhere in Canadian industry. He told me that he could not see any advantage in that 40 day period; the big farmer will be protected, while the worker will not. This is how, in my opinion, we must endeavour to maintain a certain balance between the protection we granted to the farmer and that given to the worker.