

Mr. STEWART (Edmonton): Is it possible from statistics to have some tables prepared, even if they are merely estimates, of the indebtedness of this character, chattel mortgages and indebtedness of every sort? Because I take it that even agreements for sale that are in existence will hardly come under the category of the estimate the Prime Minister has presented in the table. There is a very large indebtedness which I suppose in the ordinary sense of the word we would call floating indebtedness that would be taken into consideration by the board. I presume it is impossible to obtain figures of these, but if they could be procured I should like to have them.

Mr. BENNETT: I think that the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Speakman) especially, will recall that last year a very determined effort was made to secure figures covering the indebtedness to which the hon. gentleman (Mr. Stewart, Edmonton) has referred. The difficulty of course is apparent at once; the amount owing to the grocer varies from time to time; the amount owing to the implement dealer varies. When this scheme of arrangement, this compromise plan, is being considered all these debts will be dealt with. But to form even an estimate of the indebtedness of the farm population of this country from time to time under all heads is something that I know from the results of the effort made last year is impossible. Is it not fair to say that no satisfactory estimate was arrived at of the total indebtedness of the farm population of the country? Is that not a fair way to put it?

Mr. SPEAKMAN: I think the Prime Minister has expressed it correctly. The committee explored every avenue in an endeavour to get even a fair estimate of the total debt outside of mortgages and chattel mortgages, of the multitude of debts owing to implement companies, lumber companies, oil companies and wholesale houses, to say nothing of retail stores. We found ourselves unable to arrive at anything more than a very loose estimate, nothing that we ventured to place on our record because it was based on so little actual information.

Resolution reported, read the second time and concurred in. Mr. Bennett thereupon moved for leave to introduce Bill No. 92, to facilitate compromises and arrangements between farmers and their creditors.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

Mr. BENNETT: It is understood that we shall endeavour to afford the widest opportunity for considering the contents of the bill on second reading. The bill is printed in English and in French, and will be available for distribution to-night.

CANADIAN FARM LOAN ACT

PROVISION TO FACILITATE AND INCREASE EXTENSION OF CREDIT TO FARMERS

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister) moved that the house go into committee to consider the following proposed resolution:

That it is expedient to amend the Canadian Farm Loan Act (R.S.C., c. 66) to facilitate and increase the extension of credit to farmers, to authorize the Minister of Finance to purchase additional bonds issued by the board, and guaranteed by the government, and to provide for supplementary advances by the board.

Mr. HANBURY: Explain.

Mr. BENNETT: I endeavoured to indicate to the house this afternoon in a broad and general way that this bill is complementary to the bill dealing with the adjustment of farm indebtedness. In view of the fact that the bill deals with a number of amendments that have to be made in consequence of administrative experience, perhaps it is desirable now only to refer to the fact that the bill to be based upon the resolution contemplates the sale by the board of debentures to enable the business of the board to be carried on, so that it may meet the conditions to which reference has been made, namely the inability of those who pay off their long term mortgages to secure reasonably cheap money. The extent to which the debentures may be purchased by the government will purposely be left blank. That matter the house will deal with at the proper time.

I also indicated that the measure founded upon the resolution contemplates that additional advances to those already provided for in the provisions of the Canadian Farm Loan Act may be made, to enable a scheme of composition or arrangement to be carried into effect; and lastly that additional advances may be secured in provinces where there are chattel mortgages by a charge upon personal property, in order that the farmer who has entered into a scheme or arrangement with his creditors may have some small additional capital with which to commence the struggle back to prosperity.

Mr. H. E. SPENCER (Battle River): Has this resolution particular reference to the bill known as the farm loan act?