

Farm Machinery

I suggest that this amendment is typical of the attitude of the official opposition all through this session. I suppose I have been subjected to as much criticism from the Tory benches this session as any other minister. I have listened to the right hon. Leader of the Opposition condemn me for being an auctioneer, for travelling around the country trying to learn from personal experience and conversation with farmers what their problems are and what they need from this government. I have heard him say specifically that nothing is being done for the farmers: When are you going to bring in legislation?

Mr. Horner (Acadia): Tell us what this legislation is going to do.

Mr. Hays: I have even heard him say, bring it in and we will pass it. I have brought it in.

Mr. Horner (Acadia): And we are in the process of passing it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order; may I bring it to the attention of hon. members that the Minister of Agriculture has the floor and should not be interrupted?

Mr. Hays: Not only have the Conservatives delayed this measure with long, repetitious speeches, but now they would go all the way and dispose of this legislation, which offers a completely new approach to this most basic problem, the cost of essential machinery. They talk about sending this bill to the agricultural committee for answers to their questions, and then they try and kill it before giving me even the usual opportunity that is provided to answer these questions. The hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona is an experienced member of this house. Surely, he knows very well that once the principle of this bill has been approved we would go into committee of the whole house, at which time every member can ask the questions he wants to ask. I am prepared now to answer the questions that have been raised so far.

First of all, I should like to say that I share the view expressed by the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) that we should first give this legislation a try. This is new, experimental legislation. After it has been in operation for a year or so, if we find it needs amending I will be pleased to introduce those amendments and submit them to the agriculture committee. However at this stage I believe the farmers of this country would like parliament to pass this legislation. Let us get it into operation in time to help them plan for their spring operations.

Before I go into the questions raised at an earlier stage of this debate, let me refer to one raised this afternoon by the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona. He suggested that this bill will tie up farmers' credit in syndicates and in machinery. This has not been the experience with the British farm machinery syndicates. In fact their experience has been exactly the opposite. They have found that when a machine is owned by several farmers, each will invest in it only his share of the purchase price. This will be a smaller investment than if he owned the same machine on his own, and may even be smaller than if he had owned a smaller or older model. The British experience has shown that this capital, which is not needed for investment in his own individual machine, will be available for investment elsewhere. In fact we found the large majority of British syndicate members considered the syndicates had enabled them to reduce the amount of their capital invested in machinery. For these farmers the British experience has shown that special credit to assist in the purchase of shared machines will, in fact, have the effect of increasing the amount of capital made available for other investments.

I have studied the remarks of everyone who has taken part in this debate, and studied them with great care, especially those who indicated they were either opposed to this legislation or not very impressed with it. I was disappointed to find not a single helpful suggestion or useful alternative proposal in any of the remarks of those who were most critical. The hon. member for Cariboo (Mr. Leboe) had a suggestion to make which could be considered as worth while. He indicated he supported this bill, and I will refer to his suggestion later in my statement.

I was especially disappointed in the contribution to this debate by the hon. member for Acadia (Mr. Horner). He has spoken twice on this measure already—

Mr. Horner (Acadia): I will speak twice more.

Mr. Hays:—but although he was extremely critical of it I could find nothing in his remarks that could be taken as a positive suggestion for some better way than this to relieve our farmers, especially our smaller farmers, of their high machinery costs.

I intend to give some specific examples in this statement, as to just how this legislation will help the small, family sized farmer improve his operation and increase his income. From my experience, they seem self-evident