

Hon. Mr. WATSON: Would you wipe out the legislation of last year?

Hon. Mr. CALDER: Wipe it out. Then where would both parties be? They would stand before our courts. What is happening at present is that we are asked to sit in judgment on this matter, and there are legal questions involved that many of us do not grasp. That being so, I say let us go back to the old law, and place the farmer exactly where he was, and place the grain trade exactly where they were, and let them fight it out in the courts of the land, and find out what should be done, and where justice is due. I think that would be very fair and very reasonable unless some other satisfactory solution can be found.

Hon. H. W. LAIRD: Honourable gentlemen, I am sure the House has listened with a great deal of pleasure to the addresses which we have heard thus far regarding this legislation, and we have had the assistance of the presentation from the respective standpoints of those favouring and opposing this Bill. Yesterday we had the privilege of hearing a very learned legal disquisition on the part of the promoters of the Bill, and to-day we had a discussion which was very informative upon certain features of the Bill, from the other standpoint.

Having been a member of this Committee, and having attended all the meetings, I realize that this Bill is surrounded with many technicalities and legal details which possibly the ordinary layman has not been able to comprehend. If my honourable friend from Moose Jaw (Hon. Mr. Willoughby), who addressed his legal argument to the House yesterday, was appealing to the Court of Appeal, or even to the members of the Committee who heard the technical evidence, he might have been understood better than he was by many members of this House. As I say, the subject is surrounded with so many legal and technical details that if we allow ourselves to drift into a consideration of those side issues, important in themselves, but necessarily technical, we will never arrive at an understanding to what the main features and principles of this Bill really are.

I realize that in this House there are many members who were not on the Committee, and they have not the privilege of hearing the evidence and discussions in the Committee, and I can easily understand that there are a number of members in this House who do not yet understand what this Bill is all about. To ask them to vote on legislation so important as this Bill, without a full comprehension of what it involves, is to my mind hardly reasonable.

Hon. Mr. CALDER.

I have lived in Western Canada for 25 years, and my activities there have brought me in contact with a knowledge of the practices in the handling of grain, both from the farmer's and the grain dealer's standpoint, although I have not had any connection with the trade for 20 years, and have not been directly or indirectly interested in it during that period. I was glad to get out of it, wiser and sadder, and I fortunately stayed out of it up till the present time. But I have acquired information and knowledge of the business detail in the handling of grain, and I will endeavour to discuss the matter, not from a prejudiced standpoint, but from a fair, impartial standpoint, apart from side issues, and free from legal technicalities, some of which may have a more or less important bearing.

As a preliminary to the discussion of the merits of this controversy, let us devote a few moments to see exactly how much grain will be affected by this proposed legislation, and thereby get an idea of the importance of the issue between these contending parties; and in order to get a clear idea of the situation, let us first consider the different methods of marketing, and see exactly what class of wheat and the quantity of it, which will be affected.

Up to to twenty odd years ago, the Western farmer was confined in his marketing to the use of the country elevators, which were not as numerous in those days as they are to-day. It was in the early days of a pioneer country, and the farmers claimed that the country Elevator Companies took advantage of them, and not only deprived them of fair prices for their grain, but also imposed on them in the matter of weights and grades. This feeling became general among the farmers, and led to the original organization of the Grain Growers' Association in the year 1901. It was largely due to the agitation by the Grain Growers' Association that the first relief legislation was secured, which consisted of the necessary provision by the railway companies of loading platforms. By means of the loading platforms farmers were able to load their grain from waggons direct into cars, and ship their cars to terminal points, and sell their grain through commissioned agents who were largely located in Winnipeg. The loading platform system, to some extent, made a farmer independent of the line elevators. These loading platforms exist at the various shipping points at the present time, but owing to the increased facilities and the more satisfactory treatment of the farmer in the later days, they have become obsolete, except in some parts of Manitoba. So that the first method of mar-