

the House since the beginning of the session and they have always been turned down by the government. I believe that the situation has reached an epidemic level for our beef producers and that the federal government must act, even though the Quebec government does not want to ask for help, it seems, particularly since the primary cause of the beef crisis is the ever rising price of feed grain which seriously affects the market.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) suggested earlier that the slaughter which is going on in Quebec is almost senseless and quite useless. But tonight, I would like to make quotations reflecting the opinion of our farmers and explaining their behaviour. I believe that the Minister of Agriculture is misinformed or uninformed about the intentions of our producers.

If we consider the prices published in the Grain Chronicle of October 11, 1974, we find that in 1972, corn and barley cost only \$1 and \$1.40; in 1973, they had gone up to \$2.04 for barley and \$2.53 for corn. In August 1974, corn sold for \$3.69 a bushel and barley for \$3.50, and the dealers expect the prices to go up to \$4.70 for corn and \$4.30 for barley in a few months.

● (2110)

Mr. Speaker, I say to the minister that it is not exactly because of a beef or calf surplus in our area that the farmers have to slaughter their cattle, but because of the lack of money, a lack of means to feed the cattle this winter. That is why they would rather kill them this fall rather than go into debt to the extend of three times their value this winter.

However, what is most ridiculous about the situation, Mr. Speaker, is that in 1971, the government was paying western grain producers not to sow their fields because Canada would have had a grain surplus—at that time it was a grain surplus, now it is a beef surplus—which would lower consumer prices. Would it not have been more logical at that time to build storage facilities to guarantee supplies for three or four years in case of bad crops?

Because of this negligence, our farmers cannot feed their herds this winter. They will therefore have to sell them on the market for a ridiculous price since the big buyers will take advantage of this sad situation, as always, to get for next to nothing the producers' beef and sell it at fantastic prices. Proof of this is in the fact that the price of beef did not go down one cent at the consumer's level. On the contrary, consumer prices are constantly increasing. Our Quebec families still look for a few pounds of hamburger, the cheapest one they can find on the market, because they cannot afford choice meat.

For months Canadian producers, and Quebec ones in particular, have been increasingly begging both levels of government in the hope of getting relief from either side. It must be observed, Mr. Speaker, that in most cases where governments offered help, it was aimed at allowing farmers to get deeper into debt, to the point that their present indebtedness forces them to sell their land in order to repay finance people, while we are granting loans without interest to foreign countries, to the extent of hundred millions of dollars each year, for periods up to 60 years. I repeat without interest.

Slaughter of Calves

But we do not find the means to allow our farmers to secure loans at reasonable rates, in order to modernize their equipment and become truly efficient, as the term is used among self-appointed agricultural experts.

There is apparently a principle in Canada that what is good for foreigners is not good for Canadians. One must then conclude that Canadian loans are first intended to serve foreigners before Canadians may be helped.

As far as direct help to subsidize production is concerned, I believe the government will have to change completely its policy of helping industry by investing more into agriculture, our basic industry, before making grants with workers' and farmers' money to multinational American companies at the rate of \$100 million at a time, under the pretence that these companies create jobs in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge the House to find in Canada one industry creating more jobs than farming. The government will have to stop playing international finance at the Canadian people's expense and remedy the current situation. The government is indeed well aware of the situation. Going through the beef price stabilization program, I realized they knew the situation. They could have submitted to the House measures we could debate. The situation is very simple.

There is an excess of supply, that dictates the price farmers need to earn their living, over demand. Prices fell below profitability level. Such is the case not only in Canada, but all around the world. Certain markets are glutted with beef to such extent that such countries as ECE members had to stop imports. This is only made matters worse. Further, he said:

However, in the meantime, Canadian producers need help during these hard times.

I admire the farmers' courage. We continue to take things lightly, Mr. Speaker, and to give nothing.

I believe the farmers, after all the promises made by the two levels of government, have decided to take action, to use the only weapon available to them, to act in their own way. That is why there were demonstrations, slaughters, and calf destructions. There were not only calves, as suggested by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). He should not forget that all those calves were bound to become mature. The farmers had no hope of being able to feed them during the winter. This fall, there will not be any shortage of beef, but it will be scarce next summer or during the coming months. An article appeared in *La Presse* which reads as follows:

Thousands of calves slaughtered on Quebec farms.

I shall read a few excerpts to give the minister an idea of what the farmers think:

Mr. Paul Couture, president of the Farmers' Union, disclosed yesterday to *La Presse* that thousands of calves have already been slaughtered in various parts of Quebec in the last few days.

According to Mr. Couture, it is due to the fact that farmers are unable to sell their cattle to feeders whose production costs are too high compared to the sales prices. For instance, it costs 60 cents a pound to raise a calf and its wholesale price is between 15 and 40 cents, according to its grade.

Being unable to sell or feed their calves, the farmers prefer to slaughter them.