

Feed Grain

from work yesterday of the grain elevator handlers because, without them, the millers cannot obtain grain even if they succeed in crossing the picket lines.

Mr. Kirouac also said that he had nothing against the strikers, that they were in their right since this is a legal strike. However, he held the government responsible for the situation because it is up to the government to solve labour relation problems so that no one may suffer from the government's inability to solve them. These are the words of Mr. Kirouac, a responsible man and an agricultural expert who could be compared easily to several members of the House.

He added that the millers must supply about 6,000 egg producers, some 15,000 poultry and turkey producers, 23,000 industrial milk producers, 5,000 plain milk producers and about 6,000 hog producers who cannot store grain for more than a week since they lack the space to do so. Consequently, they must get their grain from the ports on a regular basis.

Yet, Madam Speaker, this afternoon the minister said that it was possible for Quebec producers to go to Montreal even though he is well aware, but did not say that like the ports of Quebec and Montreal, on the few days when this was possible, served first their own customers, which prevented the others from obtaining supplies.

I therefore regret to say that the minister had either erroneous information or bad intentions. Knowing his honesty, I am more than willing to believe that he was ill-informed. But how could he possibly have been since within the government party there are enough Quebec representatives to inform the minister. He went on to add that he had no proof when the fact was mentioned that some producers, being excessively worried, had to lead their animals to the slaughterhouse. And the minister, in reply to a question I asked, said that such was not the case and that my observation was not justified. And yet, last April 13, in Beauce, for instance, an hon. member had surely informed him; he even asked questions of him, emphasizing and showing his concern. He questioned the minister and was not any more successful than we in obtaining an answer. For example, an inspector from the provincial Department of Agriculture disclosed that during last Friday alone a slaughterhouse in Beauce refused 40,000 hogs. And everywhere the same situation prevailed. The reason for it all was not that the hogs had not reached the slaughterhouse on time, but rather that the producers, in view of their concerns and impossible circumstances, obviously wanted to avoid the worst—famished hogs readily devouring one another.

These observations have been made to the Minister of Agriculture for more than two weeks ago, and we are scandalized to see that he was unable to give one or several replies or, at least, some type of assurance. The question was once again asked of him by one of my colleagues requesting some assurance that no producer would be lacking in supplies, to which question no one seemed to be willing to reply.

The minister did answer on a few occasions that in certain ports, there were some supplies. He seemed completely unaware that there is a lot of difference between the supplies themselves and the ready access to ports. Sure, in Quebec City, producers were allowed in freely for

a few days to load their trucks, for silos were empty. But concerning supplies in the Trois-Rivières area as mentioned by the minister, which should account for a few more days supplies, there is no possible access to them. Producers are therefore prompted to turn not only to Montreal, but also to the province of Ontario, and especially the Prescott area for their supplies.

We already know what problems producers are faced with, problems of thaw and fines they have had to pay because their trucks were overloaded. The government of Quebec agreed yesterday to let producers load in whatever they could without necessarily being fined. Such is therefore the whole series of difficulties our producers are faced with.

The hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) mentioned that problem earlier and stressed its importance as we did within our own party, but we still expect a government answer to know on the one hand what is happening especially with respect to the agreement expired on December 1st, 1974, and on the other hand what solution the government intends to present this Parliament with in order to enable producers to get their supplies in a normal way.

Madam Speaker, those questions have remained unanswered for several days, and those are the reasons which led us to favour an emergency debate. We want the government to provide us tonight with the means of reaching a solution.

Maybe we shall be asked what solution we suggest. It is up to the majority government elected last July to provide this country with leadership and administration, and, therefore, to find solutions. God knows, Madam Speaker, how many solutions with respect to agriculture as well as in other respects we had during the electoral campaign.

An hon. Member: There still are some.

Mr. La Salle: Somebody says that there still are solutions. I sure hope we will know about them tonight. I hope so too for producers. I am not pleading for myself tonight; I said earlier that it was with great sadness that I felt I had to participate in an emergency debate because of the difficulties producers face.

An hon. Member: He is crying!

Mr. La Salle: No, Madam Speaker, there is nothing to cry about, as the hon. member says, and I know he will not cry over that, I know it well. In any case he sits on the other side of the House.

I think, Madam Speaker, it is urgent that government members who offer us solutions as valid as those they were talking about last July make them known to us tonight.

About supplies which the minister says are available to a certain extent and in a particular port, he is right, but he failed to add that accessibility is impossible. Where there is access there is no grain; where there is grain there is no access. The minister did not elaborate, yet he knows that. The consequences are serious for producers in view of added costs. The minister pointed out yesterday that he would be prepared to consider and examine additional costs and make a decision later on. The producer also