

*Feed Grain*

If this debate has no more purpose tonight, I hope that at least when the Prime Minister, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Agriculture wake up from the long, restful sleep they are taking while we are here, they will peruse some of the debate and see the concern that has been consistently expressed by members on this side of the House, especially by backbench members from the areas where the problems of which we speak tonight are most acute.

The government has the power to act. It has known about the problem and the seriousness of it for at least two weeks. It has done nothing. That, Mr. Speaker, is shameful.

[Translation]

**Mr. Béchard:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Béchard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to put a suggestion to the House. In view of the late hour and of the number of members wishing to take part into the debate, could we not, with the unanimous consent, decide that those who will speak from now on will limit themselves to 10 minutes in order to allow every member who wish to speak to do so?

**Some hon. Members:** No.

[English]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members have heard the suggestions of the hon. member for Boanventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) that speeches be limited to ten minutes. This can only be done by unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. Members:** No.

**Mr. Paproski:** Mr. Speaker, some members' speeches are a little longer than ten or 15 minutes and I think we should carry on as we have been.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** As long as they do not go beyond 20 minutes, I have no objection.

**Mr. Otto Jelinek (High Park-Humber Valley):** Mr. Speaker, it being well after midnight I will not take the time of the House during this emergency debate to repeat in perhaps different words the substance of the harmful dock strike at Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec which my colleagues before me have already given. Instead, I would like to point out some of the outdated and antiquated means which the government seems to have accepted as a way of life when dealing with labour disputes such as the one we are presently discussing.

I must first give credit to the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) and the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) who are responsible for bringing this emergency debate before the House at this time. Looking at the record of Liberal management I doubt whether we in this House of Commons would even be discussing this particular strike, certainly not before we were faced with the loss of thousands of heads of livestock and poultry due to the

[Mr. Clark (Rocky Mountain).]

stoppage of grain deliveries. This is precisely my point—the fact that the Liberal government, when dealing with this or any other strikes, be they legal as is the one we are considering tonight, or illegal as has been the case much too often in the past, does not act until after the fact, after the harm has been done, after millions of dollars have been lost, after thousands, indeed millions, of working man days of productivity have been wasted.

● (0020)

Time after time the government sits complacently by while irreparable damage is done to the economy by strikes and walk-outs, and this during a period in which the economy certainly does not need an increase in domestic problems—there is enough reason for anxiety as a result of international pressures. In my opinion there is no question that the main cause of internal domestic inflation is the ever-increasing rate of work stoppages and strikes, be they legal or illegal. If the country is to survive the system it was built on, immediate action must be taken in this area.

I believe there is urgent need for federal legislation requiring union groups in a single public service sector to bargain with the Treasury Board on a joint basis only for an agreement of perhaps not less than three years duration. The result, in the simplest terms, would be an assurance to the taxpaying public that each essential service sector would be strike-free, except for the possibility of a walk-out every three years or so. There is no better example of the need for such legislation than the dock strikes which are taking place in Quebec today, when we consider that only recently parliament was obliged to introduce back-to-work legislation affecting dock workers in British Columbia. The railways, the Post Office, airlines and other services run the same risk of disruption as a result of the fragmentation of union bargaining.

It is ironic that when I brought the suggestion of single sector bargaining before the House, as I did on several occasions in the past month or so, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) scoffed at the idea, and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) had no comment except to say that he was not in a position to discuss labour problems at the time. Of course at that point the minister had his dredging problems to worry about, so we must excuse him for not wanting to discuss problems relating to labour.

Things are looking up, however, because in answer to a similar question regarding single sector bargaining which I put to him today in the House he said that though he could not assure me that legislation was now being considered, simply because he was not at all certain that legislation was the best way to achieve a particular result desired, he could state that a fair amount of work had been going on within the department itself to see how single sector bargaining could be encouraged; talks with both management and labour had been going on with respect to it, and certainly on the labour side he had been receiving considerable encouragement. That answer, in itself, is encouraging to me since it shows that the government does, at times, listen to ideas from the opposition. Perhaps if we are sufficiently insistent, some of them will be adopted.