

Feed Grain

● (2030)

As long as those two forms of capital necessary for the country's prosperity will constantly be opposed, by no means will there be any social peace and security for the whole nation.

When the point is reached where workers are fighting other workers to deny them access to essential raw materials that would enable them to carry out their task, namely to produce food products to meet the needs of families, then it can be said that the situation has become extremely serious, that those who apply the divide and rule principle have achieved their end, and that time has come for parliament to introduce an emergency legislation and put an end to such situation as well as assure workers on strike that bargaining will be carried on until a final settlement is reached.

As a third means of providing farmers with necessary feed grain, I suggest—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has now expired. He would need the consent of the House to carry on with his speech.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The hon. member for Bellechasse has the floor.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse):—I suggest that grain stocks that are stored in the Saint Lawrence elevators and designed to the export market should be transferred immediately in order to meet the needs of our domestic market, until a more definite solution is worked out.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I must say that Quebec farmers, up to 1974, did not claim their rights too loudly. However, in the past few months the situation has changed, and they decided to demand efficient legislation from governmental authorities whenever a problem arises that might jeopardize the Quebec agriculture.

Quebecers consume each year \$2.5 to \$3 billion worth of products, and agriculture in Quebec produces only about \$1 billion. So there is room for expansion.

Quebec obtains outside three quarters of its food products, in a packed, canned, ready-to-eat form. We cannot bear this situation too long, because there will be a time when we depend on other countries for our food.

Farm producers of Quebec have been faced with the problem of feed grains for years. At a time, it was because they were forced to pay higher prices than western producers. Their cost of production being higher, their income was reduced. This is why per capita farm income is lower in Quebec than in any other part of the country. The situation has improved a little. But in one year producers have had to put up with six strikes which crippled grain movement.

Now, Madam Speaker, in the face of such a serious situation, as sponsor of the motion, I wanted to stay serene but firm, and I can assure the government that I shall consider it as my duty to support a legislation designed to put an end to this labour dispute in all fairness.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Madam Speaker, it is not necessarily with pleasure that I am participating to this debate. It is a lot more by obligation and particularly because this situation cannot go on very long.

I too would nevertheless like to congratulate the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) for having put forward a motion identical to the one we had planned. I would also like to congratulate him for having reminded the House of certain statistics which show clearly that the present supply is clearly inadequate. I will not recall them, since the hon. member for Bellechasse has mentioned them in a rather accurate way.

I have met this morning, Madam Speaker, with the officials of the Farm Producers Union who have drawn for us a picture of the situation, a very sad, not to say tragic, picture. Of course, there are probably some hon. members who did not want to accept the qualifiers I have been using today, and for the last two weeks. For two weeks, Madam Speaker, we have been looking for answers. The official opposition has asked the minister many questions. I would like to thank my colleagues who have supported the idea of asking for a special debate. For the past two weeks, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), whose absence tonight I regret although I recognize it is justified because I know that he is a very busy man, has not answered our questions. According to the information given to us the farmers, situation is precarious indeed impossible.

I was surprised these last two weeks to hear the Minister answer our question and even those of a couple of government members who were watching the situation daily and even hourly, without realizing the immediate need for a concrete and fast action from the government. In view of the six strikes which have plagued the farmers in less than a year, work stoppages are becoming a tragedy for agriculture and this time we are talking about the Quebec farmers. One month ago we asked for a similar debate in view of a situation with no end in sight. Today we are supporting a very particular point but which I suppose is of considerable interest to government members as many of them live in la Belle Province.

But, Madam Speaker, no matter how many pieces of legislation this government has proposed or will propose they will definitively be ruined by these work stoppages. The benefits that could accrue to the farmers are definitively outweighed by the problems resulting from these strikes.

● (2040)

I repeat that for two weeks the minister has been saying that he is watching the situation very closely and that things are not as bad as all that. Yet, this morning, the president of the APU told me about the situation. He was very concerned and thought that things could not go on this way very long.

On April 12, the secretary general of the Poultry Producers' Federation of Quebec, Mr. Jean-Marc Kirouac, gave the alarm. This was last Saturday. He said that the situation was dramatic but added that in the Quebec area, the producers had succeeded in getting supplies because the picket lines had let the millers through on certain days. Mr. Kirouac's panic is certainly caused by the absence