

Labour Dispute

grains, bypassing the ports of Montreal and Three Rivers, Quebec or any other port. The cost amounts to 35 cents a bushel after deduction of feed freight assistance.

I bet you a dollar to a hole in a doughnut, Madam Speaker, that there are several hundred, if not one or two thousand, carloads of grain sitting at this moment at the Winnipeg rail yards in normal course of transit to Thunder Bay. I bet you a dollar to a hole in a doughnut that there are three or four hundred carloads that contain barley, oats or feed wheat. It would require one train of 100 to 120 cars a day on each railroad to lay down half a million bushels of feed grain per day in Quebec.

Had the Minister of Agriculture or the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board instructed the Canadian Livestock Feed Board to require the private grain trade to start moving grain under plan C, or under a combination of plan B and plan C, the day the strike started or even a week after it had started, this strike would have no effect whatever on the people requiring feed grain in the province of Quebec.

I say to my good friends, the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) and the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) that their concern regarding the requirements of agricultural producers in Quebec for feed grain was perfectly right and justified. But they should remember and should tell the farmers of the province of Quebec that the mechanism for moving the grain is there now and always has been there, and that their requirements for feed grain can be met whether or not the ports of Montreal, Quebec and Three Rivers are operating.

Mr. La Salle: Not during the strike.

Mr. Benjamin: I would point out to my hon. friend from Joliette that under plan C of the Canadian Livestock Feed Board, carloads of grain hauled by rail do not go anywhere near the strikebound harbours of Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec. These carloads are delivered to large feed mills, feed wholesalers or feed retailers in places like Granby and many other locations. They go direct. Under the feed freight assistance act, any additional costs are picked up. There are no additional costs to the feeders in the province of Quebec, be they poultry producers, livestock breeders or what have you.

I point out to the Minister of Labour that the grossest incompetence has occurred on the part of his colleagues responsible for grain movement. I include in that the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), and the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is also my opinion that in the area of export grain, the Canadian Wheat Board is doing a magnificent job. It has been and is now bypassing the ports of Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec City, and except for two ships at Quebec City and perhaps one at Montreal that are tied up, all the other grain for export has been moved by laker from Thunder Bay to other ports where ocean-going vessels have then been loading export grain. My information is that there has been no hold-up or problem in respect of export grain.

● (1630)

I think I know why there is great reluctance on the part of the Minister of Agriculture and the minister in charge

of the Canadian Wheat Board to implement plan C or a combination of plans B and C, and that is that this will harm the private grain trade. It is my opinion that the private grain trade is reluctant to implement plan C or a combination of plans B and C because it means that large lots of feed grain will have to be transferred to other shippers or other companies and the private trade which holds that grain will lose some of its premium and some of the other profits it might make through speculation.

I hope at the next cabinet meeting the Minister of Labour will point his finger at the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board and say, "That is what you get for taking feed grain out from under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board and putting it on the open market." The private grain traders who operate out of the Winnipeg commodity exchange, and some who operate out of Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec City, are not interested in the emergency movement of grain by rail or by a combination of rail and the Thunder Bay terminal. They are not interested in that because it means they will lose some of their premiums and some of the profiteering they do on the open market on the backs of the farmers of both western and eastern Canada.

While this whole issue of the supply of feed grains in Quebec is serious and of legitimate concern to members of parliament from that province, we should remember that the shipping alternatives were there, are there now and always will be there. They have not been used.

This brings me to a further point. When we get into a situation like this, even when there is no strike but suddenly a surge of export sales or a surge in the requirement of feed grain because something has happened to the United States corn market, or some such thing, we need a transport controller who can say to the railways that they will each have to place 500 boxcars in service for the movement of grain, and the locomotives required to move those cars to eastern Canada, so that the grain is moved by rail. He should say to the railways that they have two choices: it is compulsory, or they have to do it. The machinery is there, the equipment is there, and the grain is there.

If the Canadian Livestock Feed Grain Board's figures are right, then with the benefits of the feed grain assistance measures it would be cheaper for the users of feed grains in the province of Quebec to ship it by rail all the way from Moose Jaw than to run it through the terminal, down the lakes and up the St. Lawrence Seaway. I suggest it would be cheaper by three or four cents per bushel.

What is the government doing today? I submit this is the old divide and rule game that is going on, keeping the workers fighting with the farmers, and vice versa. The mechanism is there, but it has not been used. The Minister of Labour is the one who is stuck here; his colleagues who are responsible for this situation do not even have the courage to come into this chamber. The Minister of Labour is left to hold the bag in piloting legislation through the House that runs against the grain of every member who has any respect for the right to strike and the right to free collective bargaining. The minister is stuck with this and it is about time he started throwing his weight around in cabinet. The next time he is asked to do something like