

Adjournment Debate

government is that I will guarantee to the government that the picture of Mr. Chavez and of our Minister of Labour will be all across California in a very short period of time, with a statement that the Canadian government supports Mr. Chavez. I think that is wrong, and we should bring the teamsters up here so that they may avail themselves of the same publicity so that the people in that area will not be misled by Mr. Chavez, as I believe they have been misled by him a number of times. It is time now for a free vote. I am sure, from the information I obtained from the farms I visited, that a free vote will see the teamsters have their union in this area.

I asked them why they are continuing the boycott since they have the legislation and there will be a vote. I asked them why Canadians are being asked not to buy Californian grapes any more, and I was told that the boycott has really worked, that it has given them what they really wanted.

I checked into the situation when I was in California and I have some statistics that I should like to quote:

Table grape growers and shippers in California are completing one of their largest volume seasons. Shipments are expected to total approximately 20,000 rail cars (1,250 packages per car, mostly 23-pound boxes), which will make this the heaviest volume since 1969 when 20,761 cars were shipped. The 1974 crop is expected to be 4 per cent larger than 1973, or approximately 800 cars.

● (2220)

I think that points out that Mr. Chavez's boycott has not worked, that it has been a real nuisance to many people, and that it has affected many workers.

Another paragraph in the same document reads:

The boycott by the United Farm Workers of America has been a nuisance to grape shippers, especially since their workers predominately are union members.

This is something Canadians must understand. This is not a fight between unions and workers and management; it is a jurisdictional dispute between unions, and the Canadian government should take no part in it.

The document goes on to read:

The nuisance value and the inconvenience to consumers, the major economic significance of the boycott seems to be the increase in the retail price of grapes in some markets. Retailers intimidated by the noise and disruption attending boycott demonstrations sometimes choose not to advertise and promote grapes. This reduces the volume they sell, but the natural reaction is to compensate by increasing the retail price. As a result, consumers in the few market areas where the boycotters have been most active are paying higher prices for grapes than consumers in most other areas of the country.

So all this boycott by Mr. Chavez has increased, in Canada especially, the cost of grapes to the Canadian

consumer, and it has also affected honest and sincere union workers in California who want to do their job and to pick grapes so that people who own the farms can sell them and can have a good living.

I hope the government makes sure to invite Mr. Fitzsimmons so that his union may get equal publicity over something that I insist is a straight union squabble and has nothing to do with letting Canadians buy what produce they want, but has a lot to do with putting picket signs in front of stores telling us what we should or should not buy.

Mr. Charles Turner (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make the following points to help clarify this situation and provide some perspective. First, the Canadian Labour Congress, as well as other groups, has given and continues to give very full support to Mr. Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers. In this respect the federal Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) considers it most appropriate for his office at least to extend some visible recognition to Mr. Chavez and to the cause which he espouses.

The Minister of Labour has always had close empathy with the legitimate aspirations and objectives of working people, particularly in cases involving basic rights. Indeed, the minister considers this involvement as being not only reasonable in the circumstances but democratically desirable in terms of responsiveness to the feelings of concern evinced by numerous labour groups throughout Canada.

I am informed that the minister did not invite Mr. Chavez to Canada. A committee of Canadians, including many church groups, invited Mr. Chavez to Canada. The minister held an all party reception for the guest, including representatives of the Canadian Labour Congress, the Progressive Conservative Party, the NDP, the Liberal party, and, I understand two farm workers, for the purpose of meeting Mr. Chavez.

The minister supports what Mr. Chavez is trying to do in raising the standard of living of farm workers. Certainly if Mr. Fitzsimmons, the president of the Teamsters Union, who represents 85 per cent of farm workers in California, requests a meeting with the Minister of Labour, the minister will be pleased to meet him at any time if he is approached.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

[English]

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.