

*Feed Grain*

producers in Quebec. The urgency of the situation has been stressed often enough, and yet comments in today's papers tended to fit with the description given by the hon. minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet), to the effect that the situation is serious but, thanks to the measures taken by the government, has not yet become an emergency.

When farmers are hampered by a problem, society as a whole is affected, and not just a marginal group, a small group, not just agricultural producers, but each and every citizen who depends on agricultural products for his food.

Unfortunately, that element is not always felt in the reactions of public opinion. It can be frequently noted that whenever there is an increase in the price of agricultural products, whether it be milk or butter or other food products, it is immediately followed by an outcry of indignation in the papers and among people. However, no one worries about the income of farmers.

When there is a union claim for a salary increase, people agree, they say it is fine, and one should make a good salary. But in fact, who cares about an increase in the farmers' incomes? Who cares constantly about working hours and working conditions for farmers? Farmers in Quebec still have difficulties now which stem from a labour dispute. That workers' dispute, that labour dispute which is at the root, at the origin of that difficult situation for farmers makes the situation even more tricky and delicate.

We on this side of the House believe that the labour relations system in Canada should be a liberal system, we believe in negotiations, we believe in the right to strike as a means of obtaining better salaries and better working conditions.

We often talk in this House about labour disputes when strikes as means of pressure are put into practice and cause hardships, but we very seldom hold emergency debates to emphasize labour disputes which are settled.

In today's papers, there was mention of a labour dispute which has been ironed out, but nobody during the debate tonight has stressed it. This labour dispute which has been solved through negotiations dealt precisely with harbours, and particularly with the Montreal harbour. That is not very far away from the discussions we are having. With their acceptance of the last propositions made by the harbour authorities, the members of the Montreal harbour labour union (CNTU) have definitely put away the threat of work stoppage they had held over the harbour for two months. It is said that since the Trudeau government already gave premiums on salary scales, a majority of union members could be obtained to solve the problem.

There was no need for special legislation, there was no need for a special debate, the strike was solved, but no one talked about it. But if a labour conflict is troublesome—it is normal that a strike be troublesome, it is a means of pressure—immediately we want a special debate. I do not want to say that respecting the right of longshoremen to strike solves the problem of feed grain supplies for our farm producers, far from it. What I want to say is that we should distinguish between one right which belongs to the longshoremen and another which concerns supplying. The longshoremen have a right to strike, they have a right to

[Mr. Bussi res.]

use a means of pressure to improve their working conditions, we respect this right until, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said, this really endangers the common good.

The longshoremen have the right to strike, the farmers have the right to obtain supplies to feed their animals. Not only do they have this right, but they also have the duty to do it. They have the duty to feed their stock to maintain good meat quality and also to protect the balance of farm production. They also have the duty to think about the consequences that their neglect at feeding their stock could have on the population, and also the duty to think that insufficiency or malnutrition could cause irreparable damages to our farm production. It is an awareness of these duties that this debate should give all members of the House, an awareness of this need, of this duty of farm producers to feed their cattle and of our own duty to examine their possibilities of improving and simplifying their grain supplies.

As a short term solution, I would like to repeat what my colleague for Charlevoix (Mr. Lapointe) said earlier, that all members of this House ask the longshoremen in the ports of Quebec City, Trois-Rivi res and Montreal to allow the millers to obtain supplies in the next few days.

Madam Speaker, I would like all hon. members here in this House to agree unanimously on this request to longshoremen. They are not forced to go back to work by legislation or by bludgeon. We say: You too must realize that farmers have a fundamental duty to feed their stock; let them gain access to the warehouses so they can supply themselves, then go on exerting pressure by strike, because the strike can continue.

I am convinced, Madam Speaker, that the longshoremen will hear the voice of reason and that, if we all agree to make this request, they will follow it.

On medium term, we must ensure that other loads are given priority and that the appropriate means will be taken to bring them where they are needed. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) has also reassured us on this point tonight, as did the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Coriveau). And I am convinced that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) will confirm these words.

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When there are problems, cataclysms, in other countries, airlifts are organized immediately, countries get together to transport, in no time flat, tons of foods of all kinds, anywhere in the world. It is unthinkable that within our own country, we should be unable to get organized too, to transport from one end of it to the other, the feed required to nourish what will feed us in turn tomorrow and to supply the farmers with the grains they need. It is inconceivable that such steps should not have been foreseen, that they cannot be taken quickly.

Over the long term, I believe the Canadian Livestock Feed Board should be authorized to set up reserves and charter adequate means of transport to mitigate such situations. That authority, Madam Speaker, the board should have; and it is up to the government to see to it that it gets it.