

*Feed Grain*

in Canada today. Yet we see attempts time and time again by this Liberal administration to muffle members of the House. There is also an indication that the government does not know, or is not completely aware of the facts regarding this strike. On April 8, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 4593, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) said:

Mr. Speaker, according to information I have received today most people still have some stocks of grain and there is no real loss of feed stocks. That is, no livestock or poultry are going without feed. We are watching the situation very closely and moving as much as we possibly can by all means, as I have said.

Two days later, the Minister of Agriculture abruptly changed his mind. As recorded in *Hansard* of April 10 at page 4672, he said:

Mr. Speaker, the condition is rapidly deteriorating and unless injunctions are obtained to disallow the picketing at the elevators in Quebec City and Trois-Rivières, there will be some loss of poultry and livestock. We know people are being asked to share the feed that is in the area and feed is being trucked in from Montreal and Prescott. We do not think, however, that this will be sufficient to look after the needs that will be there in the next day or two.

I would like to share, now, with the House points that were brought out in conversation with the millers' association. Contrary to the statements made by the Minister of Agriculture, the association feels that the situation is reaching dramatic proportions. They are preparing an injunction to force the port in Trois-Rivières to open if the situation does not change by the weekend. They are confusing "provisions" with "abcess". The minister said that there seems to be enough grain. The millers' association says that the grain might be there, but they do not have access to it. Producers were leading their stock to slaughter in Beauce last week, and this week it is mostly in Nicolet, St-Hyacinthe and Yamaska. Farmers are blaming this on lack of feed grain.

Producers usually replenish their supplies every three or four days. If the grain is available in Prescott, producers cannot truck it from there every three or four days. Producers are not even thinking of the cost of the strike to them in terms of increased grain costs; their main concern is to get enough feed for their stock. If producers have to truck the grain from Thunder Bay or Prescott, the increased cost of the grain would be prohibitive. In Quebec, trucks were able to pass on Saturday and Sunday, but in Montreal and Trois-Rivières they cannot. Some producers in southern Quebec have already sent some calves to slaughter because of feed shortage, calves that had not attained the normal weight for slaughter. In the province in general, producers will have to slaughter shortly because they cannot change the feeding habits of their stock.

It appears that the minister is unaware of the real truth, and I would like to pose a couple of questions to him in my closing comments because this government is not coming forward with the answers which the country is looking for. It is my sincere hope that the Canadian people will not again be disappointed. Since the hour is late and, as I said earlier, what needs to be said has been said, all we need now is action from the government. I ask the minister if he plans to introduce special legislation to deal with this serious situation. The Canadian people are looking to him for action.

● (0220)

[Translation]

Mr. Gaston Clermont (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, without downgrading the importance of the special debate which started at 8 o'clock last evening, I must inform opposition members that we on the government side have not waited for this debate to make representations to the Minister of Agriculture or to the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. I for one made such representations a number of times, and other names were quoted here by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or by my colleague from Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard). A couple of other names should be added, among others that of the member for Pontiac (Mr. Lefebvre). I join my colleagues to appeal to both parties affected by the strike in Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City. I urge them to take into serious consideration the human problem referred to by the hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine. It is not only a matter of moving feed grain. The sending of goods to the Magdalen Islands for instance is also involved.

I was amazed at the remarks by the hon. members for Saint-Hyacinthe, Rocky Mountain (Messrs. Wagner and Clark) concerning the contribution of the minister for Consumer and Corporate Affairs. They seem to be surprised that the minister participated in this debate. They implied that the minister was speaking on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture.

The hon. member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet) could speak on his own behalf for various reasons. I shall mention at least two. First, as minister of Consumer affairs, he knows full well that if the strike goes on in Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City, this will mean production costs to cattle producers in Quebec will go up. And you know what happens in this case, higher costs are often passed on to the consumer.

So I am glad to do justice to the hon. member for Papineau.

We all know, on the government side, that the hon. member for Papineau has been very concerned for several years by the question of feed grains supplies for Quebec. As recently as yesterday afternoon, cabinet ministers were accused of not having been present yesterday evening or during the night at this emergency debate. I have been told by authorized sources, Mr. Speaker, that representatives of the FPA have met yesterday afternoon with three members of the cabinet of the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who are the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet); those representatives have informed those ministers of the problems which the cattle producers are presently facing in the current situation. The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Corriveau) have set forth a list of measures the government has been taking for some time to ensure a normal supply to Quebec cattlemen. But I have to catch the attention of the minister of Agriculture and also, hopefully, of the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. I believe there is an area in need of improvement, Mr. Speaker. It is that