

*Feed Grain*

should be brought to the attention of the House. This shows once more that Parliament, the highest authority in the land, must take its responsibilities when situations such as this seriously disrupt our economy and endanger this country's main industry, agriculture.

On March 19 last, an emergency debate was held in this House on the work stoppages in western ports. I took part in that debate in order to prove that although representing an eastern constituency, I share a concern for problems arising in western Canada. As I said before, all members should have common concerns in Parliament and we all have the same obligations to the Canadian people as a whole. Let me turn now to the subject matter of this debate, work stoppages in the Quebec ports.

For more than a week, the longshoremen's strike and its impact have prompted a number of queries during the question period. The bulk of the questions were for the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). They concerned feed grain supplies at the Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City elevators, and also the feed mills' supplies in elevators and their ability to provide their customers with the feed grain needed. The minister's answers showed he was not overly concerned with the situation. As late as yesterday, the minister stated in answer to questions that there were adequate supplies in Quebec ports to meet requirements. Although I have no inclination to disbelieve the minister's statement, the situation prevailing today is different. I contacted the Bunge elevator in Quebec City around eleven o'clock this morning. As the president of the Farm Producers Union, Mr. Couture will testify, the manager told me he had in stock, at that time, exactly 62,000 bushels of wheat, 92,000 bushels of oats, and 65,000 bushels of barley. The Canadian Wheat Board had 12,500. He also told me he needs 175,000 bushels a day to meet the demand. Therefore, there are supplies for two days only. On the other hand, I am informed there are 498,000 bushels of corn. While it is always possible to feed cattle with corn alone, that will help them survive, but it may upset the balance of their diet entirely and cause losses to farmers.

At the elevators in Quebec City, last Friday, 60 trucks were loaded, 221 on Saturday, four on Sunday and 200 daily on Monday, Tuesday and perhaps today. Today, April 16, 50 per cent of the trucks loaded were from the Montreal area. This means that Montreal is getting its supplies in Quebec City. This means Quebec City is serving the whole region where production is the greatest.

Therefore, the situation is a tragic one. I am told that a hog producer was there at five o'clock on Saturday morning in order to get some feed. Only in the evening did he manage to get his load. He was crying with joy after he had loaded the feed he needed for his pigs which were beginning to eat one another. When animals start acting this way, they become a total loss for the producer. And this spells bankruptcy in a not too distant future.

The manager of the Bunge elevator in Quebec City told me that short of a miracle, he was not expecting a feed-loaded boat to dock in Quebec City before another eight days. One may readily see how precarious and serious the situation has become. He hopes that a barge loaded with grade 2-C barley now sailing on the Great Lakes can be unloaded at Quebec city even though its shipment is intended for export.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Shipping by rail remains, but only 40 per cent of the millers are served by that means of transport, and delivery is very slow. It takes weeks once the order is put in, before delivery.

Members of Parliament have received many telegrams from millers and various farming organizations describing the situation as tragic and calling on Parliament to put an end to these work stoppages which intensify the economic crisis our country is going through at this time. Consumers are faced with price and tax inflation. This inflationary thrust generates unemployment. Unemployment brings about a reduction in gross national output. The construction industry is idling. Bankruptcies are multiplying. Society in general is worried about tomorrow. Nobody trusts anyone anymore. People wonder whether essential public services will be working tomorrow. That is the situation in which we are now living in this country.

With all the difficulties in securing feed grains Quebec farm producers are wondering, and rightly so, whether they should continue operating.

The Canadian Livestock Feed Board was set up for a very specific purpose, that is to ensure that there is an adequate stock of feed grains and enough storage space to meet the needs of farm animal producers in Eastern Canada and British Columbia, contribute to reasonable stability in product and facility prices, and help to equalize feed grain prices for Eastern and B.C. producers.

So the board must assess the needs for feed grains as well as the storage space required, negotiate and coordinate activities relating to storing, handling, transportation and prices of feed grains. Such is the role of the Canadian Livestock Feed Board.

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That board comes under the authority of the Minister of Agriculture. He therefore is responsible for supervising its officials closely and ascertain that they carry out their duties efficiently by resorting to the necessary means in achieving the aims of the board.

I do not wish to blame the minister severely for the shortage of feed grains in eastern Canada; still, I must point out to him that since the fall of 1974, I have been concerned with what would happen in the spring of 1975 when the consumption of feed grains would reach its peak. I am well aware of this because of my experience as a cattle producer.

I foresaw higher consumption of feed this Spring because breeders kept more cattle over the Winter, the price of beef being low in the Fall. Consequently, there was a greater consumption of hay which created a real shortage and not an artificial one, and a fantastic increase in prices. Such is the situation. The Quebec cattlemen, the farm producers must use more feed grain due to the lack of hay to meet the needs of their cattle.

Given this, it was still incumbent on the minister to see that there should be more feed in Eastern Canada. That was obvious last fall, and many questions were put in this House, even to the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. The minister of Agriculture and the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board have both guaranteed that supplies were normal and that there