

My question was the following:

Can the minister tell us, after having met with the representatives of the Canadian Feed Manufacturers Association and the persons directly concerned with the matter in eastern Canada, what he intends to do to improve conditions concerning the price of feed grains?

The minister answered as follows:

—as I said before, the main cost is the high cost of proteins. There is a world shortage. I think the latest figures given to me show an increase of 140 per cent to farmers for these protein supplements. We will be making a decision next week as to how we will aid farmers caught in this cost-price squeeze.

Mr. Speaker, the present situation of farmers in eastern Canada, and particularly in the riding of Richmond which I represent, is very difficult. Many factors have caused this price increase in feed grains in the last few years, an increase which I consider as very difficult for producers, particularly milk producers. Canadian farmers have suffered a lot from the administration of the Liberal majority government between 1968 and 1972. Farmers, perhaps more than any other class of Canadians, have suffered during those four long years from the incoherence of the federal government in the field of agriculture.

During the years 1969-1970, the government paid the farmers of western Canada not to produce. They paid western grain producers to keep a large part of their prairies unploughed because according to them there were enormous surpluses of grains in the west and exports were in difficulty while the price of milk remained stationary.

Mr. Speaker, farmers from eastern Canada then had pay more for feed grain than what the Canadian government was getting for it in other countries.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture told me that such a situation was due to a world shortage of proteins. I can understand that if other countries, just as Canada, have paid grain producers not to produce which, as I said a while ago, has caused scarcity of grain on markets and has contributed to raise its price spectacularly. At home, for instance, in supermarkets around Sherbrooke and the Richmond constituency oats was selling at \$2.23 per 100 lbs. in January 1971 and \$4.10 in January 1973.

What did the Liberal government do to help farmers face this increase of close to 100 per cent?

The price of barley, of wheat, in short of all feed grains has more than doubled.

Soya, for instance, was the most affected. It was selling at \$127 a ton in April 1972 whereas today it is selling at \$260 per ton. And executives of the farmers co-operative in Sherbrooke told me today that they were expecting it to reach \$300 a ton in June.

The UPA says that raising a hog in eastern Canada costs \$4.36 more than in western Canada. I believe new measures involving feed grains should strive for parity between prices in the east and in the west of Canada. The UPA submitted to us a brief suggesting among other things that the Wheat Board should be the marketing body for feed grains on the domestic market outside the

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designated zone, that the grants for feed grains transportation should be an integral part of the marketing system of feed grains in Canada, that the initial prices—state-guaranteed maximum prices—for wheat, barley and oats should reflect production costs, that any policy aimed at improving grain prices in a reasonable way in the Prairie provinces should be accepted by Quebec provided milk producers always get equal treatment, that the right to deliver feed grains import licenses should be taken from the Wheat Board and given to the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

In the last Speech from the Throne, the government committed itself to introducing a bill to establish price parity for feed grains throughout Canada. So, in my opinion, the government is aware of this problem and particularly of the fact that it was mistaken during the years 1969-70-71. Mr. Speaker, we are impatiently awaiting this new bill.

Mr. Léopold Corriveau (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, on February 13 last the hon. member for Annapolis Valley (Mr. Nolan) proposed a debate on the same question.

I answered that, in my opinion, his question was essentially the same as the one asked by the hon. member sitting to my right. I also said that my answer would be the same in both cases.

Instead of referring the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) to my previous answer, I am going to repeat it to him.

It can be found at page 6 of *Hansard* of January 4, in connection with the government's undertaking in the Speech from the Throne. I quote:

The Government supports the principle of an equitable relationship of prices of feed grain to livestock feeders in various areas of Canada.

Before the next crop year, the government intends to take steps to ensure maximum progress in the production of feed grains and stock breeding in Canada; I am convinced it will respect that commitment. We are now having important discussions with various groups of producers, to make sure they will be heard and their opinions will be taken into consideration in finding a solution. I know hon. members would not want decisions to be taken without consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in farm production costs worries me and the fact that this increase stems from a world shortage of feed grains and proteins is of little comfort.

However, I am happy that this time, at least, the price feed grain consumers are getting for their production has also gone up. Let us hope that the rise in stock breeding production costs will also be reflected in better prices for the producer of feed grains and proteins, which will help him to stabilize his income while ensuring that he can produce even more feed grains next year.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I will say that everyone is aware of the seriousness of the situation, and I know a practical solution will soon be found.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.24 p.m.