

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Ricard: Has the Minister of Labour received a telegram from R. O. Blanchard Ltée, of Saint-Germain, in which the company advises him that the lives of thousands of head of livestock are threatened unless that strike is settled within 24 hours?

Mr. Speaker: I suggest to the hon. member that this question is rather of local interest. I take for granted that the minister has taken note of the hon. member's representations.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I abide by the ruling you just made with regard to the member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ricard). He is merely asking the minister whether he has received a telegram. It is not only a matter of local interest, but of general interest throughout the province of Quebec.

Will the minister say whether or not he has received telegrams from Quebec farmers' organizations concerning feed grain?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is putting forward the same argument as the member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot. It is not a matter of general interest to inquire whether or not the minister has received a telegram.

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): I found out, in the past three years, that questions regarding western grain and amounts or subsidies paid for western grain are accepted. On the other hand, when Quebec agriculture is involved, such questions are never accepted, while those concerning western grain always are. Could you tell me why? Is agriculture in the province of Quebec not important enough?

[English]

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the hon. member's question as notice.

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: May I bring this up at ten o'clock?

Mr. Caouette: On another point of order. You claim there is no urgency, Mr. Speaker, but on the other hand all the telegrams we are receiving state that the farmers are out of feed grain for their cattle. It seems to me this is emergency enough for the minister to reply.

Mr. Speaker: What I suggested to the hon. member is that the minister has noted the representations. I take it for granted, once again, that all the necessary steps will be taken in view of the representations made by the hon. member.

[Mr. Speaker.]

[English]

[Later:]

Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosthern): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the reported shortages of feed grain in the province of Quebec, can the minister tell us what has happened in respect of the government's feed grain supply and storage policy.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question is of a very general nature and is one which cannot be asked at this time.

[Later:]

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Agriculture. In view of the very serious and dangerous situation which has developed in Quebec among farmers raising cattle as a result of the shortage of feed grain, to which reference was made initially today by the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ricard), will he get in touch with the minister of agriculture of Quebec and, in co-operation, do something to meet this emergency which will have serious consequences if the strike continues, as apparently it will.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question asked by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition is obviously the same question asked by a number of other members although it is, of course, couched in different language. It may be that the question as now asked by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition conveys a greater sense of urgency. The Chair would be placed in a very difficult position if this question were allowed, in view of the fact that the other questions were ruled out of order.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I may speak to that point. In no way was I trying to ask a question—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Did I hear someone say "oh"?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Let me suggest to hon. members that this situation is serious, and that is why I directed my question to the Minister of Agriculture. The other questions all led up to this situation. There were various reasons why other questions were not allowed, but let me point out that today is