

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

• (10:10 p.m.)

Canadian contributions to insurance plans covering fodder crops.

Shortly after my appointment as Minister of Agriculture, I gave certain provincial authorities to understand that before making a final decision on the amendments to the federal act I would recommend during the current session, I would call a conference of provincial authorities to give them the opportunity to state the amendments they would suggest. Representatives from the ten provinces were in attendance at this conference held last Thursday.

The provinces of Ontario and Quebec have indicated that they were chiefly interested in establishing crop insurance schemes for fodder, especially for dairy cattle.

A great deal of the day was devoted to a discussion on that kind of crop insurance. The federal government is now aware of the views of the provinces and that will enable it to determine the type of changes that should be presented to parliament. It is my firm intention to do everything I can—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the minister, but his time is over.

[English]

LABOUR RELATIONS—WHITESHELL, MAN.—
STRIKE AT NUCLEAR RESEARCH
STATION

Mr. E. R. Schreyer (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, the strike of nuclear reactor operators at the Whiteshell nuclear research establishment has been on for a week now. Normally one would not raise a matter such as this in the House of Commons but would leave it to the process of collective bargaining. However, there are one or two aspects of Crown corporation or government policy connected with this labour dispute which deserve an airing here and an answer by the minister and his department.

Without going into the detail of the points in dispute between the striking workers and Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, I can say that the main cause of the strike has to do with Atomic Energy of Canada rigidly insisting on maintaining an artificial wage differential as between its Chalk River establishment and its Pinawa establishment. Apparently the reason given for maintaining this differential is that the Pinawa area is in a low wage area of the country; therefore the corporation refuses to bring the wages up to parity with wages paid at Chalk River.

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Mr. Speaker, this differential has no basis in economic fact, because research indicates pretty clearly that the prevailing rate of pay to similar employees working for Manitoba Hydro and for other corporations is actually above the rate paid to operators in Pinawa, and even at Chalk River. Therefore in that sense it is not a low wage area at all.

Furthermore it has been proven that the cost of living to the workers in the nuclear research establishment in Pinawa is actually higher than the cost of living encountered by the workers at the Chalk River establishment. The policy that is being maintained by Atomic Energy of Canada Limited in this regard is actually not proportionate to the cost of living, but is actually perverse, having regard to the cost of living. It is very difficult for the nuclear reactor operators to accept this policy. There is serious questioning of it.

Furthermore, allegations are made to the effect that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited in this regard is following cabinet directives. I should like to hear from the minister or from his parliamentary secretary some concrete comment about this, because if it is a fact that cabinet is issuing directives to Atomic Energy to maintain these wage differentials, it amounts to a serious kind of regional discrimination. I think not only the workers of that area, but the people of Manitoba have every right to demand that this policy be reversed.

Mr. Jack Davis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys): Mr. Speaker, the member for Springfield (Mr. Schreyer) originally asked two basic questions. The first is, has the minister involved himself in any steps or taken any action to settle the strike at Whiteshell nuclear research establishment. The answer is no. However, the minister has been fully informed regarding the negotiations between Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

The second question is, has the minister or the government issued any directive to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited relative to wage levels and wage differentials to be paid as between the Chalk River plant and the Whiteshell plant. Again the answer is no.

However, it is common knowledge that different hourly rates are paid across the country for the same work having regard to the wage structure existing in different parts of Canada. It is also the practice of the