

*Slaughter of Calves*

they do inside the building. There is nothing unusual in that except of course that we Canadians do not see that. We are quite pleased to eat those animals, of course, at meal-time. We do not see them being slaughtered and we are untroubled, we sleep peacefully, our conscience is at peace.

● (2140)

However, that is how the animals are slaughtered in our Canadian slaughterhouses, in my area as in any other area of Canada. There has not been any slaughtering of animals yesterday in Lac-Saint-Jean. It is not true. The slaughtering was done outside instead of inside. Personally, I feel too many were slaughtered, I approve of the symbolic protest gesture on the part of the farmers. Perhaps they could have slaughtered fewer animals as a symbol of their protest, but it seems they had to slaughter 600 of them in order to impress the Canadian people. Otherwise, there would have been no response.

I believe the goal set by the farmers in those Quebec demonstrations has been reached. We were made aware, the Canadian public opinion and authorities became aware of the situation. I hope the Canadian consumers were particularly made aware of the problems the beef industry has to face in Canada. We owe it to ourselves to do something and I hope we can rely upon the comprehension and support of all opposition members and particularly on the Canadian consumers' support.

**Mr. Claude Wagner (Saint-Hyacinthe):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to take part in this debate and I am doing it following the account that was made by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Lessard), an objective and balanced account, from a man of experience, who knows something about the agricultural situation in Quebec.

I must point out in particular that I was listening respectfully to the hon. member's remarks. And I hope that some day his magnificent qualities will be recognized and that he will be appointed as a parliamentary assistant or else to some higher office.

Mr. Speaker, on October 15 last, as I was taking part in the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, I said, and I quote:

In agriculture, the government will have to launch a "green operation", as the saying goes, the time has come to give it all we've got. When one considers the proliferation of auction sales in Quebec especially, one soon realizes why the farmers are growing angrier.

And I added:

Recently, 2,000 of them, in front of the Quebec Parliament, exposed their grievances. Madam Speaker, let us not wait till those people, who rightly hope the governments will solve their problems, grow so impatient that they go beyond the bounds of reasons and are led perhaps into even more difficult situations.

That was, Mr. Speaker, my assessment of the situation on October 15 last. The facts now show that my words which made government members smile at that time were unfortunately too well-founded.

Mr. Speaker, those pictures we saw on television of a public cattle slaughter campaign dramatized the impatience of producers and reminded everyone that their patience is not without limit. And that action we saw was

[Mr. Lessard.]

a follow up to an increasing number of marches and demonstrations of all sorts in the province of Quebec which should bring public authorities to meditate on that situation. At the rate this discontent is increasing, we are one step away from social chaos.

It seems to me we have now reached a point of no-return when people exacerbated by the frustration of the cost of living, the inaction of those in power, feel they have to resort to extreme means to draw the attention of legitimate authorities on their disarray. It will have been necessary, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean (Mr. Lessard) pointed out earlier, to slaughter 600 animals in Lac Saint-Jean for the governments concerned of both Quebec and Ottawa to stop and examine the Quebec agricultural record. This short special debate we are having tonight will be of any value only to the extent that we, all of us, deal with the causes of the anger of beef producers in particular, and farm producers in general.

What are those causes? What are the real basic problems in that whole business? That is what I would like to deal with without passion, without innuendos and without insults of any kind.

First, we all want, particularly in this time of inflation, to meet the needs of the consumer. We will manage it provided the farmer himself is satisfied and can plan the management of his business. However, the present situation of fluctuating beef prices makes such planning of farm operations positively impossible.

The federal government bears the primary responsibility for the agricultural situation prevailing in Quebec in that it lacks planning in that respect as in many other ones, therefore allowing for the disorderly management of the cattle market and the exportation of American problems into Canada.

We have to realize that for want of an orderly beef marketing system, whatever it is, or of any other adequate solution, the victim once again is the consumer and also, as a matter of fact, the farmer, both being mainly, though not uniquely, people from Quebec.

And yet that situation is not new, since in some 40 years, 17 royal and other commissions, have revealed a lot of inconsistencies especially in respect of controls.

It is no surprise that the present government has apparently chosen for its motto: "Let go and let moo". Let us talk about controls, Mr. Speaker. Are the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister in charge of consumer protection aware of the fact that in Quebec for instance, and particularly in Montreal, swindlers and speculators of the worst kind keep the market under their own control by storing at leisure Canadian beef or United States imported beef. I urge them to check whether that is true, and to take the necessary measures to put an end to that shameful and antisocial process.

The federal government is again responsible in respect of the anger of Quebec farmers, since it has no really efficient control over intermediaries between producers and consumers. And, by third parties, I do not necessarily mean the wholesalers and even less the food retailers, but rather those profiteering adventurers on the make in our economic system and those people are well known to the ministers concerned.