

• (1640)

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to proceed with my comments by adding that the sharp criticism which the hon. parliamentary secretary directed against his government and probably against his minister when Bill C-176 was being debated has led him to adopt a more conciliatory attitude and that his statement surely purports to cover up this criticism. Unless he was asked by some ministers to make these comments—

Mr. Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): This is absolutely false.

Mr. Ricard:—since the higher authorities are unable to muster enough courage to criticize a liberal provincial minister.

At all events, I have noted that the hon. parliamentary secretary has attacked a provincial minister who is party to an agreement for setting up a general agricultural policy that would be viable and profitable to the industry; it is an attack that does no credit to the hon. parliamentary secretary.

In fact, what does that report call for? And I shall ask my hon. friends opposite from the province of Quebec whether they are in disagreement with the report submitted by Mr. Toupin to his Quebec cabinet colleagues. Here are the main general goals:

- 1) Integration of the agricultural sector in the general economy;
- 2) Effort to bring farm incomes into line with those of employees in other sectors of the economy;
- 3) Regionalization and diversification of resources;
- 4) Mobility and redistribution of resources;
- 5) Increase in Quebec's self-sufficiency on the agricultural plane;
- 6) Improved management of the offers of agricultural products and more balanced sharing of markets;
- 7) Maintaining of a socio-economic infrastructure in rural communities;
- 8) Increased programs for research and technological and vocational training.

This is what the Quebec Agriculture Minister, following the approach initiated by his predecessor, hon. Clément Vincent, wants to obtain for the farmers of his province. And it is amazing to see a federal representative from the province of Quebec, who happens to be Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, indulging in an outburst against the provincial Minister of Agriculture.

His predecessor the hon. member for Richelieu (Mr. Côté) would never have thought indeed of making such statements since they only add fuel to the fire and because it is a well known fact that there are differences of opinions, as well as of interests between the two levels of government and that they can only be settled through goodwill, understanding and co-operation. This is why the arrogant attitude shown by the parliamentary secretary is unbecoming to a member from the province of Quebec representing the farming people.

I beg his colleagues from the province of Quebec to behave in such a way that his words may not undermine good feelings between the two levels of government because, there again, the first people to suffer would be the farmers and such is not the purpose of our being elected. In the circumstances, the parliamentary secretary

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should be the first to promote the interests of the farmers instead of sowing the seeds of discord at those two levels of government.

Mr. Marcel Lessard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): On a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The parliamentary secretary is rising on a question of privilege.

Mr. Lessard (Lac-Saint-Jean): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe has now resumed his seat. He apparently wanted to impute intentions to me when he said that I was against the policy outlined in the white paper of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson).

It was not at all the reason for my intervention yesterday. It is about the Quebec Minister of Agriculture's statements regarding his inability to bring in a policy because of the federal jurisdiction. I have the support of all my colleagues in that connection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I would ask the parliamentary secretary to resume his seat.

The Parliamentary Secretary's question is not one of privilege under Standing Orders and the procedure of the House. As I said earlier it is more a matter of debate and I do think that hon. members will be able at a later stage to express their views thereon.

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague from Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) pointed out yesterday, this bill includes certain aspects with which we agree.

Granted, it is now easier to obtain the credit required to develop Canadian agriculture. Still, we must, as members of the opposition, point out what I would call the silences, the absences, the oversights with regard to introducing real reforms intended to solve at long last the problems of agriculture in Canada.

Some time ago, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) himself tacitly recognized the existence of problems, and even recognized the absolute necessity of not staying put and of solving, from the ground up, the basic problems of the agricultural industry.

Again as the hon. member for Bellechasse said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, it is all very well to give the farmers greater credit facilities, but we must consider above all the means of making farming profitable to the man who devotes himself to it.

We must assure to producers a fair income comparable to the average income of those in other professions.

Mr. Speaker, when we have to face such facts and a government recognizes its deficiencies, we wonder why it does not bring in some amendments to solve all those problems. I agree that it is easy to criticize, to make suggestions.

Mr. Speaker, the government gets some real assistance in that field, especially from all Canadian farming unions, among others, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture as well as the CFU in Quebec.