

Supply

for Compton (Mr. Latulippe) mentioned it and as the maple season is coming closer the same problem will arise.

And I quote again:

A high percentage . . .

—Last year—

. . . of those who did not produce any maple sugar . . . explained the fact saying there was a shortage of labour. And of those who did tap their maple trees, many tapped only a few of them for the same reason . . .

Strangely enough, that manpower is very often there, within reach, but paralyzed, frozen by the Unemployment Insurance Act or that on social assistance. What a paradox to speak of a shortage of labour when everyone speaks of a high rate of unemployment. It is also maddening for the serious producer who racks his brains trying to understand what is going on. The unemployed who still have some courage and some pride would be very willing to earn a few dollars but if, all things considered, working does not net them any more, can they be blamed for losing all ambition or interest in seasonal work?

Especially when one has to work waistdeep in snow! I know what I am talking about; for a long time I helped with the production in my own maple-tree groves; I know the work is rather exacting, demanding of your energy and that working conditions are hard. It happens many times that snowshoes are not adequate because snow is too soft to support your weight and you sink in it with snowshoes. Then we have to manage with snowshoes, carrying buckets full of maple sap taking care of not spilling them if you want to have it boiled to obtain maple sugar. If the sap is spilled on the ground, it a complete waste.

• (2120)

There is another field, Mr. Chairman, where much more consideration should be given so that a solution may be found for this problem. In fact, the maple syrup industry is also part of the farming industry and, as I said previously, it is divided into two areas. There is another aspect to be considered which is the weather. I will not discuss this aspect further as the hon. member for Bonaventure-Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Mr. Béchard) who is now behind the curtains—I hope he will participate in the debate later and second me—says it is a matter that concerns the Almighty above and nobody can do anything about it. During the summer of 1972, the weather certainly did not favour the eastern Ontario producers and those of western Quebec in particular. On August 9, the Quebec government was asked—the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) indicates he asked also—to prevent a disaster and to stop the producers of this region from getting rid of their herds by assisting them to obtain the necessary fodder for the hibernation of their animals.

It so happened, Mr. Chairman, that favourable answers were given. I do not doubt of the sincerity of ministers, but I wonder how the creation of areas was made. I am at a loss to understand how two or three parishes are forgotten while another is getting assistance, because weather, generally, does not change because of geographical limits.

For instance, I note that in the riding of Lotbinière which I know quite well, some parishes have been designated, including Parisville in the far west of the riding, Deschailions, Villeroy, Val-Alain, Sainte-Françoise and

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Fortierville. Then they went as far as Sainte-Agathe in the eastern part, flying over the parishes of Joly, Sainte-Anastasia, Lyster et Dosquet which I know very well.

Mr. Chairman, I delved into the problem to find out the reasons behind those designations. I did not get any satisfactory answer and that is why I raise the issue. I see that the minister is listening with attention because a number of producers have yet to receive the \$400 grant. I am making that point so that we will try with goodwill and sincerity not to show at least openly, preference for one region or parish over another.

A third factor, not the least, in agricultural profitability is the famous system of prices, the marketing. The instability of prices is an element that plays to the disadvantage of the producer. A House committee has now been established to find out if price increases would not be the result of people charging excessively for their production. I hope this committee will work seriously and that it will not take into account only the consumers' interests. I have much compassion for the consumers. I understand the workers, the welfare recipients, the elderly, the handicapped who because of their income cannot face the increase in food prices.

On the other hand, producers are also human beings with families and responsibilities and this also adds to their production costs.

For instance, in 1971, our potato producers were affected to a certain extent by extremely low prices and the government had established a program providing for the repurchasing of potatoes, in order to enable the producers to cover at least their expenses if not to make profits. I think that generally the program was carried out equitably but it so happened that some of the dealers did some fiddling about taking advantage of the program; and making profits while the producers were in worse conditions than before.

I would therefore ask the minister to direct his officials to investigate in this area, and make sure that the moneys voted by parliament for the Department of Agriculture will serve their purpose.

Another matter which is exceedingly difficult to discuss in this House, because it concerns all of Canada, is the cost of agricultural production. Our friends from the Prairies will certainly understand the point made by our Eastern producers, and I hope that some day this government will develop a national policy taking into account the needs of both Eastern and Western producers, and that they will find means to enable those in the East to produce at a cost just about equal to that of Western producers.

Meetings are being held. In fact, last week I attended a meeting held by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and I was very pleased to notice that all the Canadian regions seem to agree on a solution to this problem. But much to my deception I learned the next day that our Quebec delegates had left the meeting to protest against these participants who had gone back on their positions.

Evidence has shown that in 1971 hog producers in Eastern Canada have produced at a loss and that their production costs were \$4.20 per hundred weight higher than Western costs. This is why the government, aware of the losses incurred by the producers and after repeated