

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Crown corporation while calling for respect of the CBC's independence in its negotiations, and at the same time say we are guilty of non-interference in this labour conflict because the government did not intervene in the internal affairs of the CBC, leaving settlement of the dispute to the management of the corporation.

At any rate, I feel that the hon. member's most important point is what I wanted to tell the House tonight, that upon the invitation of the president of the CBC a summit meeting has now been arranged between the union leaders on the one hand and the management of the CBC on the other hand, together with two executives of the union and of the corporation.

I should just like to abstain from comment and hope that this renewal of direct negotiations—which I had hinted at in my reply to a question in the House yesterday or the day before—will lead to settlement of the dispute.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I should also like to answer the hon. member who enquired about the financial losses caused by the strike, that is the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). The CBC is in the process of studying the financial results of the strike, to establish what gains and losses were incurred. I believe the figures the hon. member quoted are far removed from the facts but, still, we will have to wait for the CBC's figure to solve the matter.

• (2210)

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE—POTATOES—RESPONSE TO
REPRESENTATIONS FOR ACTION TO RELIEVE
DEPRESSED MARKET—POSSIBLE DIVERSION TO STOCK
FEED

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I rise again to deal with what is becoming almost not a day by day but an hour by hour issue between the people of Prince Edward Island and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson). I think that somewhat innocently enough negotiations began last fall with respect to the disposition of the agriculture stabilization board to assist in dealing with the orderly marketing of potatoes and hopefully the establishment or the improvement of the general level of income received by farmers for their produce in potatoes. On March 4 a telegram was sent to the Minister of Agriculture, a copy of which was sent to me and others, which reads as follows:

The potato committee of N.B. and P.E.I. held a joint meeting on March 4. The two committees unanimously agreed to urge that all potatoes committed to the price stabilization board be deleted from federal potato storage holdings report of March 1. We also urge that immediate disposition of committed product be undertaken and that the means of diversion used in any area be the most suitable for the producers of that area. We urge your fullest co-operation.

Ira Lewis, Chairman, P.E.I. Potato Co-ordinating Committee.

Fred McCain, Chairman, N.B. Potato Industry Committee.

Following that, I tried on one or two occasions to raise this matter with the Minister of Agriculture, who was not available. Initially I raised it with the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) who last Monday was reporting for the Department of Agriculture. He indicated that the board was not prepared to take a decision. This

[Mr. Pelletier.]

produced a second telegram from the chairman of the P.E.I. committee which reads as follows:

P.E.I. Potato Co-ordinating Committee is dismayed at recent stabilization board statement that they are not prepared to sell back committed potatoes for livestock feed purposes. In view of wholehearted support for this use by all segments including Potato Dealers Association and Minister of Agriculture as expressed to board from meeting February 4 and the fact that detailed procedures for disposal as feed were suggested to the stabilization board by this committee as early as February 8 in Ottawa this decision is acutely disappointing. Our committee emphasizes that every day's delay is costing island farmers money.

Further delay to assess already known stocks for a market that is artificially high due to reefer car shortage is both futile and costly. In view of extremely adverse producer reaction to this latest of a long series of delays and the mistrust it is creating we urge in the strongest possible terms implementation of the livestock feeding program immediately according to procedures outlined at February 8 meeting.

Ira Lewis, chairman.

Then this morning there was a further telegram, this time from the president of the P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture, which reads:

Hereby advising that island potato growers waiting only 24 hours more for decision re diversion program potatoes. If no decision by tomorrow noon permitting livestock feed program proceed immediately we calling mass meeting of all growers involved in Charlottetown and hereby request your deputy Mr. Williams attend this meeting to explain position and delays of stabilization board.

Wallace Wood, president, P.E.I. Federation of Agriculture.

Finally, this afternoon, in the provincial legislature of Prince Edward Island the following resolution was passed. I will not read the whole of the resolution because the "whereases" really reiterate the arguments which were previously put forward. The body of the resolution reads as follows:

Be it therefore resolved that this Legislature do unanimously approve the resolution supporting the federation of agriculture and other farm groups in their request for an immediate reply for the disposition of the potatoes purchased by the stabilization board.

It is absolutely incredible that the Minister of Agriculture and the stabilization board should at this time, so many days and weeks after the representations received from all levels of the potato industry in P.E.I. plus the provincial government, be unable to explain or inform the agricultural industry of Prince Edward Island their reasons for the delay in dealing directly with this problem. Indeed, as I look at the question I find it not only disturbing but downright confusing.

There are some obvious benefits to be derived from the immediate disposal of the stocks that are presently held. These benefits can be seen firstly and perhaps most obviously in terms of the general level of agricultural need at present in P.E.I. There is a very obvious need at this date in the winter season for extra feed to carry over the various stocks that are being handled in the agricultural segment this year. Secondly, there is the remaining 75 cents per hundredweight that would go into farmers' pockets that should not be overlooked at this point. Thirdly, because of the shortage of reefer cars and the few potatoes moving generally, some very important employment could be provided in the grading of potatoes. Fourthly, the extra grading space available is not inconse-