

Feed Grain

Madam Speaker, injunctions which have been taken and gave results have been mentioned in the newspapers and various sectors. In fact, an injunction was issued in Quebec City last week following which it was possible to move out considerable quantities of grain which were stock piled in the port of Quebec city.

I must mention that tomorrow, other injunctions are to be requested in Trois-Rivières and Montreal and I assure the hon. members that, in the discussions which I had today with the chairman of the UPA, I insisted on the fact that the UPA could, through its members, request injunctions and should at the very least try to make the longshoremen involved understand that there is some urgency and that they should show humanitarianism and allow the mill owners to load up the supplies which they need urgently. This matter was discussed with the chairman of the UPA and we shall be getting in touch again during the next few days to see what these next steps will bring about.

However, in replying to the completely unfounded accusations of the member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), I must remind the hon. members that the government has established a service which loads hopper cars in Thunder Bay to bring grain to eastern Canada. Today, 59 hopper cars were loaded and are now headed for eastern Quebec. Steps taken by the government have brought about the assurance of 300 Canadian National hopper cars in at Thunder Bay for the exclusive use of grain bound for eastern Canada.

The Canadian National and Canadian Pacific have assured the availability of 200 hopper cars for other more remote points in eastern Canada. So I can state that through the government initiative and especially the work performed during the past few days to cope with that condition, it is entirely false to maintain, as the member for Joliette has suggested, that the government has not tried to cope with that difficulty while respecting the basic right of the longshoremen who are on a legal strike in the ports of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City.

• (2110)

An hon. Member: Farm producers also have rights.

Mr. Ouellet: Obviously, Madam Speaker. To my mind, there is not a single member of parliament, who does not recognize farm producers some rights. That matter is not in question here. There is no need to make a series of speeches to pay homage to the farmers. I am sure we all agree on that.

I feel that the action of the government, through its agricultural policies in the last few years, has proved categorically and fully to what extent, under the leadership of our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), it has endeavoured to better understand and help Canadian farmers.

I would even go further, Madam Speaker, and say that the government is fully aware of the situation. When there is a strike, the Prime Minister said so yesterday, there always comes a time when public interest must be weighed against the right to strike. The government and the cabinet are now looking into that matter. At this point in time, Madam Speaker, I doubt that it has time to

[Mr. Ouellet.]

legislate the strikers back to work in the ports of Montreal, Trois-Rivières and Quebec City.

To my mind, if the right to strike is to have any meaning, if it is to be of value to Canadian workers, the time and possibility to use it must be allowed those to whom it was given.

An hon. Member: You are not doing anything.

Mr. Ouellet: I must say a few things to the hon. member who, I suspect, would like that right to strike withdrawn since he told us to assume our responsibilities without being specific about how to do this, unless it is to order the strikers back to work.

I am sure, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), in close co-operation, have been watching the situation closely on a daily basis to ensure that the rights on the one side will not result disastrously in the suppression of the rights on the other. When time will come to act more drastically, if need be, the government will not shirk its responsibilities. It has acted often in the House by bringing in legislation to force strikers back to work. But that cannot be done without due consideration each time a conflict is brewing somewhere and causes some difficulties.

Eastern Canada farmers have to face problems. I have mentioned some measures taken by the government to alleviate them. I am confident that such provisions are, will be and will keep being applicable and that there will be no need to legislate in order to withdraw the right to strike from workers out on a legal strike.

[English]

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Madam Speaker, unfortunately we are having too many of these Wednesday evening debates.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: It is an indication that there are a number of problems which this government is not facing up to before they becoming emergencies.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Peters: I was very interested to hear the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) defend the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). That is certainly a switch. I think that in itself is worth the price of admission to tonight's debate. The minister agreed that there are certain problems and that the government has had to take some unusual measures to deal with them.

I am glad the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) and the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) proposed this motion which I believe highlights the fact that the government is not facing up to problems as they develop and before they reach crisis proportions. I do not come from the affected area but I imagine the problem is neither as bad as has been stated by the opposition nor as good as has been stated by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs: the truth lies somewhere in between.