

Feed Grain

stand that, Madam Speaker, we will surely be able to legitimate the presence of Quebec members in Ottawa, otherwise it will keep on being a colossal farce since the government members will be there to defend the government's position and the opposition members to attack the government.

Now I do not believe, at least it is my point of view and that of my Social Credit colleagues, that that should be our role. We do not claim, we from the Social Credit Party, to be the only ones to represent Quebec. That is not true. But we hope that we and other members from Quebec, regardless of our party, will exert pressures on this government by taking advantage of this dispute to show them that in Quebec we are as strong as western people when it comes to cope with a labour problem such as this one.

Mr. Speaker, when a problem from western Canada is brought in the House, each time I realize that it tries the patience of hon. members from Quebec—often myself first—not because it is not important but because we are being given a lesson in solidarity and unity. I tell myself that in such situations it is exactly the position we should take and I think that in this regard the positive speech of the hon. member for Bellechasse has been a commendable example.

● (2330)

[*English*]

Mr. J. M. Forrestall (Dartmouth-Halifax East): Madam Speaker, there are a number of things that should be said.

Mr. Paproski: There is no minister in the House.

Mr. Forrestall: There have only been a couple of ministers here all evening. It is quite proper for us to commend the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) and the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle) for their initiative in bringing this subject matter to the floor of the House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Forrestall: Unlike most hon. members who have risen tonight, I do not take particular pleasure in being here, largely because the problem that keeps us here is one that could have been resolved a couple of weeks ago with a little foresight and speedier action on the part of the government.

This evening we are dealing with a number of separate matters and it is important to keep them in perspective. The sense of solidarity among the members from Quebec is quite noticeable. I have sensed tonight in the debate something other than a desperate rush on the part of some backbenchers merely to support the words that come from members on the treasury benches: I think that is a positive thing. It suggests to me that there is indeed a serious problem in Quebec with respect to access to feed grains.

Coming from Nova Scotia, and particularly the area of the port of Halifax, I have known all my life that the St. Lawrence river is frozen over in the winter and I have wondered what is done with feed grains for six months of the year. There must be a serious problem or we would not be here tonight: all hon. members who have participated in the debate recognize that.

What brings me to my feet tonight is my wish to remind all hon. members that, notwithstanding the grievous and potential damage that can be done to producers in Quebec with respect to their livestock and poultry, there are some things we must keep in mind. In fact, this is a narrow problem. As I see it, it is the application of proper collective bargaining procedures and, in this case, the abuse of certain of the prerogatives and rights of men who are on strike legally.

The Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) dealt fairly forcefully with this subject tonight, and the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser) expressed the feelings of all of us that it is not acceptable to any member when people on strike abuse certain of their rights to the detriment, damage and injury of people who are not directly involved. I think this is something that we should keep in mind.

What seems to be happening here is that as a result of picketing arising out of a legal dispute between the Maritime Employers' Association and the ILA, serious potential grievous harm can come to producers—and this situation must be corrected. As virtually every member has said, it not only must be corrected but it must be corrected quickly.

It is important that we keep in mind at this stage a word of caution and do not unduly interfere with that legitimate dispute. What is important is outside interference in legal acts such as picketing, or the action of the president of the International Longshoremen's Association in the United States, Mr. Gleason, and his associate Mr. Sullivan, who have attempted to direct Canadian longshoremen not to service ships plying our waters.

I mentioned earlier to the Postmaster General that I think it is a measure of the seriousness and good will of Canadian port workers that by and large they have ignored this direction. I think they have ignored it properly, and I think they will continue to do so. I believe that the situation in Saint John will rectify itself and, with respect to the movement of goods in and out of Canada from overseas, the situation will become acceptable to all concerned in a short period of time. We hope it will be corrected at about the same time that the government gets around to correcting the situation in Quebec with respect to access by millers to storage elevators and storage bins.

So far there does not seem to have been any substantial damage done to the national economy as a result of the strike which is now about two weeks old. Again as the Postmaster General indicated earlier, this strike follows a long period of relative peace in the river ports. The last walk-out was in 1972 and it was of seven or eight weeks duration. It arose not out of a legal or legitimate dispute but, rather, as a result of varying interpretations of a contract that had been signed only a few weeks before the walk-out.

The third thing that I think we should bear in mind when we are considering representations to the government with respect to methods of bringing this unfortunate situation to an end is the nature of the ILA itself. We are not dealing with a homogeneous group; we are dealing with a very loose international organization—indeed, a very loose Canadian union whose strength lies in the autonomy of its separate locals, not in its national struc-