

*Feed Grain*

What is happening now? What will we be faced with? What will happen if tomorrow, because of the vagaries of the court system, somebody will not be able to get the injunction which the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs said should be obtained at Trois-Rivières? He said that an injunction could be used if some agreement could not be found across the picket lines. He suggested that he had said today to Mr. Couture that the UPA could ask for injunctions as an agricultural organization. But could they in law? What contractual right do they have?

It is not easy to walk into a court and obtain an injunction. I see hon. members on the other side nodding their heads and I know that some of them are learned in the law, which is a great contribution that they bring to this House. It is not that easy to leave problems of settlement to recourse within the civil legal system. There are times when the government must step in. I am not advocating for one minute that every time there is a work stoppage, especially a legal one, parliament move in *carte blanche* and wipe out the right to strike. But there are times when certain action must be taken, we hope, on a selective basis only.

If the threat that faces the producers in Quebec is that they will not have sufficient feed grain to feed their poultry and livestock and that their poultry and livestock will have to be slaughtered prematurely, perhaps at the wrong market time, and if they are slaughtered other than in the normal course of the agricultural business year, plenty of members on the other side of the House know perfectly well how that dislocates the entire agricultural economy and how it upsets the stability of supply which is necessary to maintain stable prices for the consumers in Quebec and outside Quebec who buy those products. All hon. members agree with this.

I say to all hon. members tonight that we have not had an answer to allay the fears that have been brought to us personally by representatives of the farm producers in Quebec. I also say with great regret that despite some of the oratory tonight, some of the invective, heckling and good natured boisterousness which goes with debates, especially debates that take place after the supper hour, we have not heard from the government a specific answer or a program to meet what may well become a very serious situation within a few days.

● (2220)

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me remind all hon. members that when the Minister of Agriculture was before the television cameras this afternoon, as a result of questions asked by hon. members on this side of the House he admitted that he could not give any estimate of what the amount of feed grain for consumers in Quebec would be in a few days' time. That is the situation we face, and it is a situation in respect of which there has been no answer this evening.

[Translation]

**Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of the dockers' strike in Montreal, Quebec City and Trois-Rivières, its effects have appeared to become ever greater as days went by. The sector of the economy most severely affected at the present time is that of agriculture, and should such a situation persist much

longer, the effects would prove disastrous, even in other sectors of the economy. As a result, I wish to make my contribution to the present debate by supporting very strenuously the proposals of my colleague, the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), who moved this important motion which is now before the House. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the hon. member for Bellechasse on having raised the issue several times. It simply means that he had foreseen the need for this conflict to be settled as early as possible so as to prevent extremely serious consequences.

We are now placed before the facts and have to recognize the need to take definite steps in the very near future.

On a few occasions, the Minister of Agriculture indicated there was no need for alarm about the present conflict. On the one hand, he pointed out that there was a certain amount of cereal reserves in the grain elevators, and on the other hand, that the millers as well as the people in charge of transporting the grain to the agricultural producers had access to the ports for supply purposes. The reason behind the minister's statement was probably that he wanted to avoid interfering in the conflict and reassure the millers as well as the agricultural producers.

The situation, Mr. Speaker, has now considerably changed, to the extent that the reserves previously extant in the grain elevators are now, for all practical purposes, completely expended. As a result, the House of Commons is no longer in a position to ignore the situation and can no longer wait to take action because such idleness on its part would risk demolishing an agricultural system that is already sufficiently weakened in eastern Canada, and more particularly in Quebec.

I do not intend to describe the pitiful condition of our agriculture, for I did it earlier in this House, as I indicated the excessive cost of farm inputs, the decline of net farm incomes and the market fluctuations in that economic sector. However, what I want to emphasize is that if our farmers are now short of feed for their cattle, in addition to the rest, it might do them irreparable harm. Are we going to witness more auctions? Is the flight of our farmers to cities going to increase further? And furthermore, who is going to carry on farming?

These are very important questions, because, if agriculture is to be weakened further by an extension of the strike, that will have an impact on the rest of the economy and finally, the consumer will have to foot the bill. In fact, everybody is losing in that sort of situation.

As for the strike itself, Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that the longshoremen are wrong or right. However, we must admit that more and more workers of various sectors are frustrated, they feel unsafe and fight a systematic and continuous increase of the cost of living, which compels them to always ask for more, and more and more often.

I also notice in this conflict that the UPA did not find advisable to ask for an injunction against the longshoremen. They let the *Coopérative fédérée du Québec* do so because their opinion is that they are an association, therefore a union, and they do not want to fight another union. They would like the government to incur all the odium of the conflict by putting the strike to an end through an act of Parliament. I say here that the leaders of