

Feed Grain

that every member of this House who has the public interest at heart agrees with that sentiment. I agree wholeheartedly with the Postmaster General, as does my party.

However, when you have a situation in which exactly the opposite is taking place, what does the government do? It is not good enough for the Postmaster General to ask why the provincial authorities should try to blame the federal authorities for these difficulties. This is a labour dispute that comes within federal jurisdiction, and it is incredible—I say this without attempting to use language that is extreme—that three ministers who should be involved are not here tonight.

Where is the Minister of Labour (Mr. Munro)? Where is the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan)? We understand that he refused to give up a special engagement, in spite of the fact that the House of Commons of Canada agreed to an emergency debate on a matter that affects the livelihood of the farm producers of Quebec who are responsible for a tremendous portion of the food production of this country.

● (2210)

Where is the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand)? None of the ministers who should be here tonight are here. We heard a very fine speech from the Postmaster General on a subject which is not at the centre of the debate tonight. I know that hon. members will agree with me that we have not had answers to the two crucial questions which the representatives of the farm producers in Quebec brought not just to me, not just to my colleague, the hon. member for Joliette, not just to the hon. member in the other party, the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), and not just to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs or to a number of other hon. members to whom he referred tonight. Those representatives brought their problem to the House, and we have an obligation tonight to try to meet that problem with facts and at least a recommendation from the government side, or some indication as to what the government will do about it.

If that had been put forward, then of course it would be the responsibility of members on this side of the House to say something about the proposed measure, either in praise, in criticism, or as suggestions to try to improve it if necessary, or support it if it were found to be satisfactory. But we have nothing to bite on, and if any one had been listening to this debate for the last several hours, any one who had stumbled in from another planet, or even, as the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said, any one 50 yards from the hill, that person would have wondered what in the name of heaven we were debating. It is incredible to me that after producers from Quebec have come here and spoken to members from every party in the House and asked for help, we put on a performance such as this one tonight.

This is not good enough regardless of whether one comes from the province of Quebec or from the province of British Columbia, as I do. I am sorry to have to say that to hon. members, but I am saying it because it is true, and I might as well say it now because some of us undoubtedly will be asked tomorrow by some of the producers from Quebec what in the blazes we were playing at tonight.

[Mr. Fraser.]

I have not risen in the House tonight to say that the solution to moving the grain is to end by legislation the legal strike taking place, but I am prepared to rise in the House to say that there is a time when, barring other methods, a selective form of legislation may have to be brought forward to meet a situation which is biting at the vitals of the economy of the province of Quebec through a sector of the economy in Quebec, and which is striking at the capacity of farmers to produce food for Canadians. It may well be that such selective legislation should be considered.

I listened to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs tonight when he made a long speech about the right to strike. I believe in the right to strike, but I do not believe that any right within a civil community is absolute, and I do not think most hon. members do so either. I see the following statement in today's issue of the *Montreal Star*:

And, in Ottawa, Prime Minister Trudeau said ministers are looking at the possibility of federal intervention to end the strike.

Perhaps the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has not got around to reading the *Montreal Star*. I am sorry that he is not in the House now, but perhaps some one will show it to him tomorrow morning.

Now I want to raise a matter which I find quite incredible, and I think that even my friends on the other side of the House will recognize the logic of what I am about to say. Again I will quote from the same article, and I ask hon. members to listen to these comforting words. This is about the Minister of Agriculture. The article reads:

Answering questions in Parliament yesterday, federal Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan hinted strongly that his department would compensate farmers for the extra feed costs resulting from use of the more expensive truck and train transport.

"We've always looked after them in the past," he said.

Should federal aid fall through, Mr. Toupin pledged his support for provincial compensation to the farmers.

He said he felt the federal government should pay for the extra costs since it had jurisdiction over the strike.

Surely in the name of heaven you do not defend the right to strike by calling on the taxpayers in Canada to pick up the tab for the guys who are getting it in the ear. It does not make any sense.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fraser: We have not had answers to those questions tonight.

Let me come back to what the Postmaster General said in terms of the difficulties in this particular strike. I do not want to interfere with the negotiations, although I understand that they have broken down and I should like to hear from the Minister of Labour what is happening. But one thing I do know is that the Gold report came down on March 14. On March 24, 1975, the Maritime Employers' Association accepted it. If anybody would take the trouble to look at the Gold report they would recognize that the employers accepted the recommendations in one of the most comprehensive conciliation reports that has ever been written or filed in the history of Canadian labour affairs. I am sorry that my friend, the Postmaster General, is not here now because I am sure he would agree with me.