

Agricultural Policies

The producers, says the telegram, have given serious consideration to the problems of overproduction and, at their annual general meeting held on April 22 and 23, voted for a quota system in marketing. Therefore, they want new talks with the federal government—

At present all doors are closed.

I remember that last year, some farmers were still able to discuss quotas with representatives of the Canadian Dairy Commission but this is no longer possible because the door has been double-locked.

Consequently, the farmers call for the reopening of negotiations with the federal government in order to establish a fair and just dairy policy. Besides, here is the text of a telegram from the Quebec Federation of Industrial Milk Producers:

The Quebec Federation of Industrial Milk Producers, at its general meeting in Quebec City on April 22 and 23, 1970, objects publicly to the dairy policy of the federal government—Requests your intervention in order to suspend immediately this policy which unfairly penalizes the dairy producers of Quebec. These producers, who have just voted for the adoption of the quota system for their production are asking for new negotiations in order to establish a fair and just dairy policy, considering this new situation.

These are farmers from Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. We must not forget that those from the Lower St. Lawrence and from Nicolet are making the same request and are against the government policy. I will not have time to read the whole article but I will say that not only farmers from Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean but also those from the province of Quebec as a whole are not satisfied.

When hon. members from western Canada take the floor in the House, they talk about wheat. It is natural since it is the West's main production.

As for us from Quebec, milk is our main product. Unfortunately, when it is the subject in the House, the members from Quebec remain seated or they rise to try to defend an indefensible dairy policy.

Mr. Speaker, it is about time to stop that nonsense. We must no longer remain silent, but show that we represent an area which needs to be defended. This is why I am speaking this afternoon, because once again I want to point out to the government the injustice that prevails in eastern Canada, particularly in the province of Quebec.

The minister said earlier that the government is paying about \$140 million to help dairy producers. I wish he were in the House, because I would ask him to tell us how much

money he takes from farmers through that penalty of \$1.25 per hundredweight of milk.

• (4:50 p.m.)

One hand gives what the other takes back. Then, it is said that something was given. Why? Because farmers cannot stop the cows from giving milk. Indeed, the cows are not used to regulations. They give milk just the same and that is why farmers are imposed a penalty of \$1.25 per hundredweight. When they get assistance, it amounts to 26 cents per hundredweight. The maximum is 56 cents.

However, when it comes to the penalty, farmers have to pay \$1.25 per hundredweight. No small amount. It is absolutely ridiculous! I have no doubt that if western wheat producers had had to pay \$1.25 per hundredweight, they would have marched on Ottawa with guns.

Western farmers are paid not too produce. I am not envious. I feel they should receive more money, and once again I ask the minister to think sincerely about that injustice. Subsidies are paid to channel production in another direction, and this is all right.

Western Canada receives a lot in proportion to its population. Indeed, the three Prairie provinces have less than 3 million inhabitants. They take advantage of the act providing assistance for grain marketing which gives them a large return in addition to another \$40 million which they had obtained before receiving those last \$100 million granted by the government. Even if they received \$500 million, we would be pleased.

But the 6 million inhabitants of the province of Quebec should at least get a third or half of the assistance granted by the government. On the contrary, they are deprived of \$100 million. They are penalized instead of being helped.

If milk producers were allowed a decent price, they would be ready to channel their production in another direction, although at the government's urging they made the mistake of getting into debt for 10 or 15 years to mechanize their operations and today they have to give up.

They are no longer in a position to pay their debts and the government, behind the scene, collects its \$1.25 dollar at the source. It will not lose that amount.

This is the reason for the surpluses and our farmers want to take steps to streamline their production. The government should help them instead of stifling them. The government