

AGRICULTURE—MILK—ANNOUNCEMENT OF
INCREASE IN SUBSIDY TO PRODUCERS

Mr. Eric A. Winkler (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I raised the question of the manufacturing milk subsidy, along with the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture on September 9. I regret very much that the minister is not in his place tonight, and I say that with every deference to the parliamentary secretary who has to take the minister's place.

• (10:10 p.m.)

I am raising this question because on reading the minister's statement I could not see anywhere in it that the minister was satisfied that the producers of manufacturing milk were in fact to receive \$4 per hundredweight for their product. This is a serious matter, because we know how the minister has played with this situation since the last election campaign. It was he who made the promise that producers of this product, in essence, would receive \$4 per hundredweight for their milk.

We know that this has not happened. All of us, including the parliamentary secretary, well know what the differential was and why it existed. We, too, had a policy to offer to the producers of this product. The point is that the minister and the government did not fulfil the promise that was made to these producers. The minister and the government know this full well. It was not until pressure was applied by farm organizations, particularly in the province of Ontario and the province of Quebec—where a somewhat similar situation arose, with a small exception—that the matter was brought forward.

I am rising because the minister would not give me the information I requested and, of course, because Mr. Speaker on that day would not permit the minister to answer, saying that this was a more appropriate time. I have the minister's statement here. In no way, and nowhere in his statement does he assure the producers that they will receive this much money. In fact, Mr. Speaker, had it not been for the ministers of agriculture in the provincial governments of Quebec and Ontario coming to the assistance of the federal Minister of Agriculture at this particular time in question, the producers still would not be receiving that which was promised in his last election campaign. Such a thing is regrettable, but it shows one of the ways in which this government has been acting. Someone always has to bail it out from problems it has got itself into.

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The *Windsor Star*, which is a paper not noted for its support of the Conservative party, gives full credit to the provincial ministers concerned for what has happened with respect to these producers.

I said at an earlier date that I believe that constitutionally the responsibility for the payment of this subsidy is that of the federal government and I cited my authority. The minister questioned what I said at that time. However, an article in the newspaper I have mentioned points out that quite likely the minister has now realized that the constitutional authority for the payment of this subsidy lies with the federal government. That newspaper article also states that probably the producers will receive more than the minimum undertaking; and if that happens, the credit should go to the two provincial ministers, not to the federal government.

What I want to learn this evening from the parliamentary secretary is whether he has the authority to make a statement assuring the producers of manufacturing milk in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec that they will in fact receive a minimum of \$4 per hundredweight for manufacturing milk?

Mr. Bruce S. Beer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish I felt constrained to thank the hon. member for Grey-Bruce for his question which, to me, is slightly irresponsible. The question asked of the minister was whether he would assure the house that the milk producers in the province of Ontario and in the province of Quebec will, as the result of his announcement, be assured of \$4 per hundredweight of manufactured milk.

I wish to draw attention to the words "be assured". The word "assure" means "guarantee". I did not—

Mr. Winkler: That is what he did during the election campaign.

Mr. Beer: It is my submission that to use the word "assure" would be absolutely irresponsible, and the minister, I know, would not make a statement of that kind. I should like to give two or three reasons to the hon. member for Grey-Bruce why it would be altogether irresponsible to guarantee to farmers a price of \$4 per hundredweight. If we were to guarantee \$4 per hundredweight for manufacturing milk it could only be done by entering into an offer-to-purchase program. This would remove from the milk manufacturing and processing business all initiative