

*Dairy Policy*

its generosity, this government has honoured its pledge. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case. Many meetings were held all across Québec. Many demonstrations were held, showing the discontent among producers, because they had given their word and respected it, whereas the government had not.

Mr. Speaker, last March 2, I was asking the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) what he intended to do concerning the dairy policy for 1976-77.

His answer is recorded on page 11403 of *Hansard* for March 2, 1976. I wish to attract his attention on his very words which I shall quote:

We do not have that much money for them to waste products and that is what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, producers have produced only according to the request of the government. And now, just because they have, they are being accused of squandering, of unreliability, of a breach of promise and agreement.

Mr. Speaker, the minister should clarify that point this afternoon. The minister also said—like several other hon. members, I received a telegram from dairymen in my riding requesting a debate in this House, to ventilate the issue—there is nothing wrong with discussing dairy policy. Some hon. members will probably accuse the Social Credit Party of playing politics with the issue this afternoon. But, Mr. Speaker, who are we, if not politicians? Members of Parliament must raise those questions. We had meetings. I do not think that the Social Credit members can be held responsible for this debate this afternoon. Meetings were held with other opposition parties. The Liberals refused. They said: "We meet in caucus." We, of the opposition, said: "We were elected by the people and are expected to meet not in an obscure caucus room, but in the House." So, I asked—

Mr. Loiselle (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Chambly (Mr. Loiselle) on a point of order.

Mr. Loiselle (Chambly): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from the Social Credit Party is raising very good points, and has put forward very good arguments, but he just said that he does not want to be partisan on this issue, and that he does not want to play politics at the expense of the milk producers. I would then appreciate it if he would stop playing politics right now since the Liberals have definitely agreed to meet with the producers, and on many occasions.

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, his case is hopeless; he still does not understand! I did not say that they had not meet with the producers, I said that we were asking for a debate.

And on March 2, 1976, as recorded on page 11403 of the *Hansard*, I asked the minister whether he agreed. That was an official request for a debate. It was not to be a debate for one party or for three, but for the four parties. I put the question to the House on March 2. The minister gave the following answer:

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the dairy farmers of Canada are coming to meet members of the Parliament of Canada. Before we have a

[Mr. Fortin.]

debate in the House I think Members of Parliament should talk directly to dairy farmers and discuss their problems with them.

What the producers further wanted was that their problems be discussed here in the House. They have nothing to hide. And the minister added:

Then, if they feel it necessary to come to the House, I do not think there would be much wrong with that.

That is what the minister said and that is how the debate got organized. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I insist that this debate be kept within terms of reference where it will be possible to make progress and that something beneficial for the producers come out of it. Mr. Speaker, that was to explain the circumstances of this debate. We are living in a dilemma regarding milk production. Should production be cut back? That is the first question. Should we consume more? That is a second question. With regards to self-sufficiency, what is the situation in Canada? Mr. Speaker, there are the three fundamental questions on which I would like to draw the attention of my hon. colleagues from both sides of the House, in order that together we may try and find solutions.

● (1450)

The quota system is a policy aimed precisely at controlling production. What is the basis for the CDC conclusions? Consumer demand. There is a third factor which fits into the picture and that is the importation of milk products and by-products.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest therefore, that producers are caught in some kind of a vise: they have to increase their production to cope with consumer demand while enjoying guaranteed income and self-sufficiency in this country. The government—and I think that many people have noticed it—covers up under the threat of a retail price increase. Whenever the producer asks for increased subsidies, he is told he will be held responsible for any increase in the retail price of milk.

Actually, within fourteen months, there were six increases in the price of milk. In December 1970, milk sold for 28 cents a quart. In March 1975, it sold for 51 cents. There were six increases within a period of fourteen months. This goes to show that, in the final analysis, the producer is against the consumer and the consumer is under the impression that he is fleeced by the producer. While they argue, the general dairy policy continues to be the major victim and the problem stands unresolved. Mr. Speaker, under the existing system, the consumer pays too high a price for what he consumes and the producer loses part of his production and part of his income.

Mr. Speaker, that is why, while this war is being waged, on the one hand by those who want income security for legitimate work, and on the other by those who must feed themselves, the federal government washes its hands of the whole thing, passing the buck to the producers by saying: You are too efficient.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian dairy producers are just about the only category of people who are told that they are too efficient and are penalized for it. At the same time, and for the same reason, the government forces the producers to pay for their surpluses. Fines are levied when production is exceeding the quotas. That is how work is rewarded. That is why export costs keep going up. Mr.