

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Maheu): I am sorry but the hon. member's time has expired. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Malpeque.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to point out to the hon. member that I am one federalist who is not trying to scare Quebecers or Quebec farmers. I am trying to make sure the farmers understand the facts as they relate to Canada, especially in terms of the supply management system.

I am assuming it was an oversight on the part of the member when he talked about 12.4 per cent of the direct moneys to Quebec farmers and that he did not think was a fair share. Quebec has 48 per cent of the dairy quota.

Has the hon. member done any calculations? If he has could he table any calculations on the real benefit to farmers in Quebec of the Canadian supply management system in terms of dairy, poultry and eggs?

The member talked about the loss of the subsidy. I will agree that is a loss. I am a dairy producer and I accept the cutback in the subsidy in terms of my contribution to deficit reduction. At the same time I know full well, as does the member, the dairy industry operates on a cost of production formula which assures efficient farmers reasonable returns on their cost of production, labour and investment. That is a pretty good deal. We know they are getting that deal from Canada.

• (1700)

I have a last point I want to make. It may just be a factual error, but I would not want the member to leave the wrong impression. The member said there was no compensation for the loss of the feed freight assistance program. Adjustment moneys have been put in place for the loss of the program. We face that in Prince Edward Island as well. In fact \$60 million has been set aside for farmers to use in order to adjust to the loss of the program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Landry: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to respond to my colleague from Malpeque. He spoke about equity. He admitted in his speech that an inequity problem had existed for a long time between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

He said that he used to be a farmer in the Maritimes. He knows full well that, a few years ago, potatoes from the Maritimes were fully subsidized for export to the Quebec market, while Quebec farmers had to pay transportation costs for their potatoes. Farmers in Quebec and the Maritimes were competing for the same Quebec consumers. If we are going to talk about equity, we should really do so.

With regard to transportation, the Crow rate has been eliminated, but some compensation formulas are still unfair to Quebec. Twenty-five years ago, I was too young to be involved in politics but some politicians, in whose footsteps I have followed, have told me: "Jean, you will see when you grow up how difficult it is to fight the federal government". I now realize that what I was told 25 years ago is still true today. All I am asking the government is to be fair to Quebec and the rest of Canada.

Mr. Jean-Paul Marchand (Québec-Est, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would gladly let my hon. colleague from Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead speak but, as you so rightly said, I am the member for Québec-Est. My riding of Québec-Est is an urban riding. I am not from a rural but an urban riding. I know of a number of farmers in my riding but they are all retired.

I nonetheless appreciate the importance of agriculture. I know that agriculture is one of the pillars of the economy, particularly in Quebec, which is about to become a country. Agriculture is a basic economic sector. I also learned a thing or two about this sector from working, a few years ago, for Agriculture Canada minister Eugene Whelan, who was considered as one of the greatest ministers of agriculture in Canadian history.

So, I am familiar with this inequity issue that was discussed at length today. It is well known that Quebec farm producers were treated less fairly than those from the rest of Canada, and Western Canada in particular. The latest budget tabled in this House by the Liberals provides a most glaring example of inequity. It is plain obvious.

While Western producers are very generously compensated—we are talking about \$2 billion—subsidies paid to milk producers in the East are being cut by 30 per cent. I must say that this is nothing new. There was much talk about this here today. Quebec has not been getting its fair share for ages now.

• (1705)

Had one quarter of federal spending for Canadian agriculture been going to Quebec, since it is normally calculated on a per capita basis, Quebec would have been much better off. Instead, Quebec got 10, 12 and sometimes as much as 15 per cent, but never a full 25 per cent share of federal spending. According to my calculations, on this basis, Quebec's shortfall for the past 15 years, since 1980, is between five and seven billion dollars.

Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac): It is a disgrace.

Mr. Marchand: Quebec has paid between five and seven billion dollars out of its own pocket in support of agriculture in Western Canada and the rest of Canada. If only Quebec farmers had benefited from such investments in their province, Quebec's agriculture would have been even stronger than it is, and that does not include the Crow rate, which cost the federal government between \$600 million and \$800 million a year. These