

Government Administrative Policies

It is always the same thing. The farmers always come after the others. If time is available, the question will be considered, if not, it will be postponed until next year. It will be postponed until October. In the field of agriculture, things are getting worse from day to day, from week to week, from month to month. Then the farmers are told: You are never satisfied. You always want something else. The more you get, the less you are happy.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechase): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, as well as my colleagues. I shall not take too much of the time of the House. Before concluding my remarks, I should like, once again, to urge the government, and in particular the Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), to reconsider the daily policy so as to meet the legitimate requests of those who claim that this policy might be harmful, not only to the persons who are its immediate victims, but also to the economy of the whole province of Quebec.

The subsidies of the government of Canada are an important part of the net farming income in Quebec, that is approximately \$50 million or 25 per cent. Because of the budgetary restraints required by its fight against inflation, the government is seeking to reduce its subsidies. They have been reduced this year and a further reduction is contemplated for next year.

Mr. Speaker, farmers do not want subsidies but a fair and reasonable return for their work. If the government thinks that consumers should pay for part of the product and the government for the other part, it is his business.

What is important is that the product has some value and that the producer is entitled to a fair share of the revenue. In 1949, base year on which the value of the Canadian dollar is estimated, butter cost 63 cents a pound. Considering the progressive increase in prices since then, we realize that in 1970,

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechase).]

the price of butter in proportion to that of other products should be \$1.07 a pound. What does that mean?

It means that the farmer who has worked and bought machinery was forced to pay more and more each year. In order to be fair to him, prices should be set so that he would be able to earn an income based on the quantity of products he sells. It seems to me that it is easy to understand. Nobody is asking for the moon. All we want is acknowledgement of this essential right of the farmer to the fruits of his labour.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that by reducing subsidies, credits for industrial milk production and the subsidies of the Canadian Dairy Commission for the coming year, the government of Canada will speed up the disappearance of marginal agricultural operations in Quebec.

If such is the aim of the government, it will attain it. But if it is trying to establish a fair and reasonable balance between consumption possibilities and total production, it should take the necessary steps to be fair by controlling imports, so that those products will not directly compete with those of farmers who have definitely chosen agriculture as an occupation. Surely they cannot be made into lawyers; they are farmers of 35, 40 or 50 years of age. Farming is their trade. They cannot become tradesmen or labourers overnight, since in all industrial fields, there is a surplus of labour.

I consider for my part that it would be advisable for the state to subsidize for a certain time those small producers, even if it cost \$1,200 or \$1,500 per year to do so. It would still be less costly than to give them \$250 per month as welfare payments and tell them to remain idle. They come to a point where they lose all faith in themselves, where they feel they are useless and a burden to society. However, if they were given \$1,000 or \$1,500 per year, the cost would be less and they would be allowed to do their share. They are proud if they can consider themselves as self-sufficient and contributing to the well-being of society, and not as entirely dependent on it.

Mr. Speaker, would that be the proper means to implement an anti-inflationary policy, so that the Maritimes and Quebec might assume the major share of the costs, even if their unemployment rate is very high? Indeed, in Quebec, God knows that the unemployment rate is high, and the same is true of