

Honour's suggestion was more in line with what we had in mind. It is correct that we had in mind that responses from the first spokesman for each opposition party should be brief. I think Your Honour has made a good point, that they should be even briefer than the minister's statement so that anything left in doubt can be resolved in the brief question period which follows. It seems to me the question period must come after the statement.

Mr. Speaker: In any event, as it fell to someone to choose how the order should be interpreted, I made the choice and I think we ought to proceed this morning in the way I outlined. It is to be hoped, this being the first such statement, we shall learn from our procedure. If there are to be modifications and suggestions regarding the format we shall use this morning, certainly those can be considered in due course and the procedure can be adapted as we go along. Is this agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

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AGRICULTURE

CHANGES IN SUBSIDY FORMULA FOR INDUSTRIAL MILK AND CREAM PRODUCTION

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would have much preferred it if some other minister had made his statement on this first occasion. I understood my statement was to be brief. I will try to be brief.

For some time the members of the dairy industry and the government have been working to build a long-term dairy policy. Working together, we formed the Canadian Dairy Commission in 1967. That was a big step in the right direction. It saved dairy farmers from abrupt swings in the market. It also provided security against barrel-bottom prices to milk producers. Now it is time to take the next step. That is why, starting today, the returns to industrial milk and cream producers will be adjusted to changing production costs. We will use a formula to do this.

As you know, at the beginning of each April a new dairy year begins and producers wait anxiously to hear the government announce the support levels for the coming year. Rapid increases in the prices of dairy inputs have made their situation even more urgent. Dairy farmers have to tie up too much money in land, buildings, and stock to live from year to year. That is the reason behind our move to formula pricing. It will give needed security to both producers and consumers.

This formula will gear industrial milk and cream producers' incomes to input prices. What it means to the efficient, hard-working farmer is that neither inflation nor a big jump in cash costs will leave him in an income squeeze. To consumers this will mean a constant supply of nutrition-packed milk. Although it will guarantee producers a fair return, consumers should realize that this also will protect them from rip-off milk prices at the farm gate.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Dairy Policy

Mr. Whelan: When people call milk the perfect food, they are right on target, and this government is not going to risk having any consumer go to the supermarket for milk and being turned away.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Two hon. members are seeking the floor on points or order. I think I can anticipate their nature. I wonder if we might allow the minister to finish, and then hear the points of order?

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Mr. Speaker, no with respect. It is precisely, shall we say, the clownish way in which the minister is trying to interpret the meaning of "short statement" which makes nonsense of our interpretation system. Members here who do not want to listen to this statement in the English language are entitled to hear it as much as possible through the very excellent interpretation service of the House. But there is no interpreter on the staff who can translate the minister's delivery of this statement, with all its limitations as to accent and presentation. It is on that point I rise. We are not here to make this procedure clownish. The House will be reasonable, but let us not make a farce of this procedure, and it is now a farce.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, to express views similar to those expressed by my colleague for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). I hope, since this is the first such statement, that in future the kind of thing we are witnessing will not happen again. The statement is important. The length of the statement ought to be weighed in the balance against its importance and, certainly, a statement is not made more brief merely because it is read in the way this statement was being read just now. May I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, take under advisement the propriety of reviewing statements, in advance so that you can decide on the basis of their length whether they are proper. Otherwise this whole system will break down.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Both comments are valid. This, of course, is the first occasion and the minister, perhaps remembering my admonition, has been trying to rush the statement in order, thereby, to make it brief. Perhaps it would be better to make statements factual. Let the minister take his time in delivery. Let us proceed on that basis and perhaps we can learn from this experience.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, there was so much noise in the House that I did not know what members were saying. I understood I was to make a short presentation. It was to be as short as possible and the question period afterwards would make clear matters that were not contained in the statement. I could have made a longer statement, of the sort that will be released later for public information, of the sort I presented before cameras, to milk producers and to the processing industry earlier today, for their information. This is done all the time. I was trying to be as clear and as quick as I could, and I apologize if I ran too fast. If you want, I can start over again.