

Interim Supply

The Chairman: The hon. member for Rosthern.

Mr. Greene: Mr. Chairman, do I have unanimous consent to continue or not?

The Chairman: There is no unanimous consent.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, I want the minister to have the opportunity to continue his remarks because this is a very important subject. Therefore I will say a few words.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. member for Rosthern has the floor.

• (12:20 a.m.)

Mr. Nasserden: Mr. Chairman, I do not think the house has heard as much old straw threshed over for a long time as we have heard during the last few minutes from the Minister of Agriculture. He was the minister who was to take the farmers of eastern Canada out of the wilderness into which they had wandered during the years of the Tory government. He is the minister who represented a party that went to the peoples of eastern and central Canada with the election slogan: "Elect us and we shall do for the farmers of eastern and central Canada what Diefenbaker did for the farmers of western Canada." Now this minister comes before parliament with his swan song—because it can be nothing else. He has admitted that he can do no better than the government of the right hon. Leader of the Opposition, during the period it was in office—all this despite the fact that more than double the subsidies today are paid to the dairy industry. I shall have more to say about that as I go along.

What has been the result of this government's policies? The result is that we have to import butter and cheese, and the farmers have been forced out of business. I wondered, listening to the minister's speech, how many dairy farmers went out of business as he talked, as he tried to tell us why his policies of the last three or four years had failed.

When Hon. Harry Hays was minister of agriculture he said, "If you have six cows you can make a living." "This minister tells the people, "To make a living now you must have ten cows." The minister's thinking shows why the dairy industry in Canada, under this government, has declined. Imagine, Mr. Chairman, you need ten cows to make a living under this government's policies. Those words the farmers of the country understand very well.

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We could forgive the government if they had not the answers, but time after time, on platforms across Canada and in the House of Commons, they have claimed to have the answers. I see the Minister of National Health and Welfare is present. He was one who thought he had the answers for all these problems. Yet this government failed to do for the farmers of central and eastern Canada what the right hon. Leader of the Opposition had done for the western farmers.

The minister gave us figures. He said that in 1962-63 the subsidies had amounted to approximately \$42.3 million and \$13 million, making \$55 million approximately. The government of that day had a 40 million pound surplus of butter, but that butter represented something tangible in return for the \$55 million which had been spent supporting the dairy industry. This government spent \$90 million, and our people have to buy butter from the other markets of the world, and our farmers disperse their herds. The minister has the audacity to come to the house and say, "You are not a dairy farmer unless you have ten cows."

I challenge the minister to say that in Quebec, to say that in the maritimes, in Ontario, in British Columbia or on the prairies. What kind of mockery have we today? Does the minister not realize that the small farmer is still the bulwark of agriculture in this country? Where are the promises and the answers which this party had to offer in two election campaigns? Today, in this debate on the eve of the ending of this session, we saw Liberal members rising to discuss the dairy question. Why? Because they realized, perhaps for the first time, that this government has failed miserably to solve the problems which face the dairy farmers of this country. The minister could not keep them quiet and the whip could not keep them quiet.

We think of what the hon. member for York-Humber had to say. It is all out of the bag, now. They have not had these discussions in caucus, of which we have heard so much during the last four years. This is the ministry which was supposed to bring the brass and the grass together so that the Canadians might have a better future. This is the ministry which was supposed to give all those engaged in agriculture in eastern and central Canada the equity and justice which is their right.

Tonight we heard the Minister of Agriculture giving his swan song—it cannot be described as anything else. As he admitted so