

Supply—Agriculture

The difference between what we are saying and what they are attempting to say is this: We recognize that the farmers have very grave problems and that we have to move ahead as rapidly as possible, as rapidly as the economy can afford, toward making the lot of the farmers in economic terms a better one. But we base our decisions on facts, instead of playing politics with the unfortunate economic lot of the farmer.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Greene: The facts speak for themselves very clearly from the standpoint of net income, from the standpoint of gross income, from the standpoint of the size of farms, the number of economically viable units capable of providing a good income, from the standpoint of the income made possible by the dairy policy. In all these areas very considerable improvements have been achieved, improvements moving ahead at a far faster pace than any which took place between 1957 and 1963. Certainly there is a long way to go and a great deal to be done, and if hon. members opposite are concerned with this problem of getting ahead with improvements at a faster pace, they will be more concerned with the ways of tomorrow as they affect the farmer than with playing politics on the basis of their so-called great accomplishments, as compared with our accomplishments.

The real problems facing agriculture are difficult enough. The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam premised his remarks along these lines and some of the comments he made were perfectly valid.

● (9:30 p.m.)

There is a great deal to be done, and while improvements have been made, many more should be made if the farmer is to achieve the economic well-being that has been achieved in large measure in other sectors of our economy.

Again, with respect to the dairy policy, the hon. member for Wetaskiwin complained about quotas. This comes under the aegis of the Canadian Dairy Commission, and quite properly so. We are very pleased with the progress being made by that commission, and I am very happy to have the opportunity of answering for the commission in the house. First of all I would say that we, and I think all hon. members generally, would like the commission to have the greatest possible independence in formulating their policies, with the funds made available to them, for

the purpose of rationalizing the dairy industry. This is no easy chore.

If hon. members are interested in what the purpose of the quotas is, it is to the end of ultimately rationalizing the industry, to see to it that persons in the dairy industry have units of a size which will produce an adequate income. This year the original plan was to have a minimum quota starting with some 50,000 pounds, which is the production as I understood it of approximately eight to 12 average cows. When the commission came closer to the time of setting the quotas for the current year it was found that this would be too rapid a pace of progress. It is as simple as that. This would create an economic hardship in human terms to too many people. So the commission in its wisdom decided to reduce the minimum eligibility to some 12,000 pounds, being the production of about two cows. It would not seem that this would be too rapid a rate of progress.

Ultimately if the industry is to be in good shape, if the people who are attempting to make a livelihood in the dairy industry are to have the kind of living we would like them to have, they are going to need far bigger units than two cows if they are to be full time dairy farmers. The question of course is the rate of change, the pace at which we can make these improvements without in human terms creating too great a difficulty or problem for the people involved in the process of change.

I quite agree with the hon. member that the quota system will not achieve perfection in five minutes, one year or two years. I believe the commission is doing an outstanding job and I would point out that the question of quotas, the question of policy has been discussed at great length over many meetings with the Dairy Farmers of Canada, with l'Union Catholique de Cultivateurs de Quebec, and with the various farm organizations that are concerned in improving the lot of the dairy farmer; and to the greatest possible degree, consonant with the funds available and consonant with the over-all governmental policy of putting the dairy industry in economic shape within a reasonable length of time, the suggestions and the directions of those farm organizations have been heeded in formulating the quota policy and will be heeded in formulating this year's dairy policy.

The hon. member for Bruce made a considerable address which was a very comprehensive review of speeches I have made, for