

Supply

by the Canadian Dairy Federation to obtain higher incomes.

I should also like to bring back to mind the difficulties producers of all food products experienced last summer. On the basis of representations made by hon. members and of course because of the minister's comprehensive attitude toward losses sustained, the government distributed \$9 million to some 22 thousand farmers, making \$400 for each producer.

I do not believe any of them lost less than \$400 and most of them lost much more. And we know that several growers or farmers have lost millions of dollars due to bad weather.

Of course, I regret that such a policy of reimbursement has been applied. We might say it is equitable, \$400 for every one, and everybody will be glad. But how could we satisfy a farmer who lost \$4,000 and received only \$400? I understand it was difficult to estimate the damages but I think, in view of their importance, we should have assessed them farm by farm.

I believe it would have been possible to make such a survey, such an estimate and to act more fairly toward growers. I take this opportunity to ask the minister to urge his officials to speed things up with regard to those who have not yet received their \$400. I know that a number of them have made this mistake or did not quite understand what was required. Some producers mentioned this to me and I am now asking the minister to reconsider their case in view of the fact that those farmers misunderstood the terms of eligibility. Indeed they are definitely full-time producers and farmers. Of course they are looking forward to receiving their \$400 but I still believe that damages could have been evaluated much more fairly and a lot more could have been given to some producers who are facing real problems mainly in winter.

I had to express these few comments to the minister while the House is dealing with the business of supply and to remind him of the importance of agriculture in my constituency. In fact, I had to express these views because they reflect the arguments put forward all the time by farmers, especially in my office on weekends.

Dairy producers are also experiencing increases in their production costs which is unavoidable. However, subsidies must be increased also if they are to make reasonable profits.

Potato producers have also experienced difficulties. Bill C-176 is intended to establish marketing boards, but I would ask the minister to make more efforts so that these producers understand the purpose of this legislation and do something to get reasonable prices. I have tremendous faith in the effectiveness of Bill C-176. However, farmers should be made to understand the need to get together and deal through a marketing board for better results. Unfortunately, farmers often have a tendency to wait for the situation to deteriorate and difficulties to become unsolvable. I think the Department of Agriculture will never overpublicize the fact that it is necessary for farmers to get together within an association if they are to obtain the maximum of benefits under Bill C-176 and to ensure that farmers are putting to good use this tool that the government has given them.

[Mr. La Salle.]

I shall end my remarks by inviting once more the minister to pay very close attention to the briefs that come to him from different organizations in Quebec and Canada as a whole. Let us hope that an interesting solution to this problem of feed grains will be forthcoming in a few weeks.

For a long time now, there has been talk of a policy to buy up small farms. In fact, talks on this subject are being held right now with the government of the province of Quebec. I don't think they have ended yet, so once more I invite the minister to increase his efforts in order to settle this question to the benefit of all farmers. I trust that he will fully understand the position of Quebec which is trying to establish certain priorities regarding farm lands within the province for the years to come.

• (1720)

In my opinion, the representations made by the Quebec Minister of Agriculture as well as certain views expressed by the Quebec premier must, I hope, have made the Minister of Agriculture realize the importance for that province of keeping some jurisdiction over agricultural planning. I think it is most important to meditate on that question and to find a mid-course acceptable to both governments so that producers of the province of Quebec may not suffer from protracted negotiations. I do hope that Quebec will be able to keep its priority regarding the selection of agricultural soils both for the benefit of the producers of that province as well as for the rest of Canada.

Mr. Allard: Mr. Chairman, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to add a few words to what has already been said by those who have preceded me.

First of all, I should like to tell the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) that he impresses me as being sincere, honest and sympathetic to the cause of the farmers, and that I would like to continue seeing him in that light in the coming months.

The fact remains, Mr. Chairman, that last year, Canada imported \$20 million worth of butter, while Quebec's butter production decreased by 1.5 per cent and its milk production by 3 per cent. Quebec's production, which accounts for roughly 30 per cent of the total national production, could obviously have improved to make up that loss. As a result, the farmer's income, which now averages about \$2,500 a year, would have improved accordingly.

For this period, the price of feed grains from western Canada has shown an increase of 25 to 30 per cent in some cases and 50 per cent in others, not to mention protein additives, which have increased 50 per cent for fish flour and 70 per cent for soya flour in Toronto. The same tendency has been noted in the United States.

For the same period, in the province of Quebec, we have suffered from a production decrease in all areas. With regard to oats, for instance, the 1971 production was 29,667,000 bushels and was reduced to 23,392,000 bushels in 1972. For grain corn, production was 13,334,000 bushels in 1971 and 9,380,000 bushels in 1972. For feed corn, production was 1,771,000 bushels in 1971 against 1,559,000 bushels in 1972. Barley production also decreased, from 1,532,000