

Economic Conditions in Rural Communities

thinks of the millions of dollars that are spent yearly on publicity by the major manufacturers of soft drinks. If we compare with the budgets of groups concerned with the consumption of milk and dairy products, the situation becomes dramatic.

Unfortunately, all of us can see that the butter market is invaded by margarine. Why the increase in the consumption of margarine? It is not because this product has a better flavour than butter. No. It is because it is cheaper. We always come back to the question of purchasing power. Some people interested in margarine sales maintain that this artificial product, with colour added if required, costs less and is more within the means of low-salaried people.

It does not seem fair to me that good natural butter be reserved for people in easy circumstances and that a substitute be offered to manual workers. All citizens are entitled to consume one of our best Canadian foods, and let us not make the serious mistake of antagonizing consumers and turning them away from agricultural products to the point where our market is flooded with substitutes whose acceptance will be detrimental to the sales and revenues of our dairy farms. Butter sales drop in the same proportion that margarine sales increase.

Instead of trying to solve the problem by starting with the farmers, who are already too hard-pressed, and by asking them to bear cost price reductions, it might be advisable to re-organize the marketing of dairy products. For this purpose, one could perhaps look to other fields, that of the automobile for instance, where the entry of foreign cars into the country is subject to control.

The problem results from the lack of markets for dairy products. It would be advisable to attempt to enlighten some people who do not realize that they are contributing to under-consumption in our population through the adoption of certain legislative measures that reduce purchasing power instead of stabilizing it. The variety of our taxes is a striking example of this.

I admit that a well-balanced dairy policy, which would enable farmers to sell their products, would be ideal. Meanwhile, a policy of subsidies may be beneficial if it is tailored to the needs.

The production system in Canada, in agriculture as elsewhere, has constantly improved. I do not think there is a single Canadian who fears that, in 10 or even 50 years, his country will not longer be able to produce wheat, butter or meat. Canadians have full confidence in the production system. On the other hand, the financial system is not in harmony with the production system. Canadian farmers produce everything that nourishes, while the financial system depletes credit.

● (4:10 p.m.)

Some men are capable of dreadful thoughtlessness. It is unbelievable to find to what extent the habit of seeing prevents them from looking. It is not at all necessary to have a university degree to understand that under the present system freedom is conditioned by the amount of money left in one's wallet. If the government takes too

[Mr. Dionne.]

much, by levying taxes, whether visible or invisible, the citizens will revolt and rightly so.

A vigorous publicity program would be needed to increase consumption of butter and other dairy products.

It is not normal that in a country such as ours, workers' families should be deprived of good Canadian butter to use margarine because of their low income.

I also believe that most farmers support fully all programs established under the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act, that is ARDA.

The purpose of these programs is to redevelop and improve the use of farm lands, water resources, forests and, finally, to improve the profitability and efficiency of farms.

So, ARDA should be administered with objectiveness and care so as to minimize economic and human problems which will necessarily be brought about by these adjustments in the field of agriculture.

As these present needs are urgent, we are asking the federal government, in co-operation with the provinces, to try to define and develop the outline of the policy for ARDA in the years to come. We are also asking that financial assistance be sufficient to prevent any delay in the implementation of existing programs. Let me now describe what is happening.

In my constituency of Kamouraska, we have a program for the construction of dikes along the shores of the St. Lawrence river, which would permit the recovery of thousands of acres and would considerably increase the land yield in several waterfront parishes. This project has been under study since 1937. I would like to point this out to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) and to his Parliamentary Secretary (Mr. Lessard). At that time, 34 riparian owners signed an agreement regarding a free right of way on their properties so that necessary repairs could be made.

A survey made in 1951 shows that there are 325 acres of fertile soil to be recuperated in certain areas. In November 1951, a sum of \$81.12 was paid to the Quebec Department of Agriculture by the county council for certain projects carried out by the department with regard to this dike.

In 1953, the hon. Laurent Barré, then provincial Minister of Agriculture, estimated the construction cost of the dike at approximately \$50,000 and requested a \$5,000 grant from the council before authorizing the work, which those involved considered to be too expensive in the circumstances.

In 1956, Mr. Avila Bédard, Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests of Quebec, authorized surveyor Marc Thiboutôt of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière to carry out the survey, draw up the plans and prepare the books of reference in order that titles might be issued to future purchasers.

In 1961, the Department of Lands and Forests turned the shore rights over to the Department of Natural Resources.