

*Supply*

• (1305)

That Bloc Quebecois member just told us, as you could hear, that there will be a 30 per cent reduction in dairy farmers's income over two years. Mr. Speaker, you heard yourself those nonsensical remarks made by a member of the House. I do not know who wrote the hon. member's speech, but that person should be fired immediately for writing such things. Yes, phone him and fast.

I will now tell all Canadians in my riding, in Quebec and throughout Canada what the facts really are: the milk subsidy is now \$5.43 per hectolitre, and it will be reduced to \$3.80, starting August 1, 1996. This means there will be an 80 cent reduction a year per hectolitre on an income of \$54. Could members opposite explain to me how they can suggest that an 80 cent reduction on an income of \$54 represents a 30 per cent cut? What kind of number crunchers do they have to come up with such figures?

The hon. member says it is in the budget. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should check the budget if he believes the figures just given by the hon. member for Shefford. Besides, the 80 cent reduction applies only to industrial milk and not fluid milk.

[*English*]

Assuming a 50-50 split on a farm of industrial and fluid milk, we are talking about an overall reduction of 40 cents a hectolitre on \$54. The people across are alleging that it is a 30 per cent reduction in revenue. Forty cents on \$54 is less than 1 per cent. That is the way the truth is being described by some hon. members across.

[*Translation*]

No, Mr. Speaker, what we have heard today from the Bloc Quebecois is quite frankly inflammatory and an attempt to scare Canadians. Listen to what the hon. member for Frontenac says in his motion: "That this House denounce the government for reducing the general budget of the Department of Agriculture by 19 per cent and milk subsidies by 30 per cent and for converting—". Now listen to this: if this is true, it means that the reverse is also true of what was said by the hon. member for Shefford, because that is not what he said. I continue to quote the motion: "—and for converting grain transportation subsidies into direct subsidies to western farmers—". And now listen to this: "—thereby enabling the latter to diversify and enjoy an unfair competitive advantage over farmers in Eastern Canada."

I just heard members insisting that farmers from other parts of Canada enjoyed an unfair competitive advantage over those in Eastern Canada.

Now this is divisive politics. The comments we heard from a member a few moments ago are dangerous because they are an invitation to Canadians, on false premises, to hate each other. That is the kind of propaganda we are getting from some of the members opposite, and I do not buy that.

[*English*]

I do not believe that western Canadian farmers have been treated more fairly than farmers from another part of the country. All governments in Canada, be they the Liberal government now, the previous Conservative one or others, may have made mistakes but they have not tried to pit one group of Canadians against the other, the way it is alleged by some members of this House of Commons today. To make that kind of representation on the floor of the House of Commons is nothing short of shameful. It is shameful.

• (1310)

Let us get to the bottom of the issue. Members across the way are talking about the reduction of 80 cents per hectolitre. It is there and I will not deny it. It affects my constituents probably more than the constituents of any other MP in Canada. I have more dairy farmers in my riding than does anyone else in the House. However, the fact still remains that the reduction of 80 cents per hectolitre in subsidy cannot be compared with the total elimination of the Western Grain Transportation Act and the one-time subsidy they will get in the transition.

[*Translation*]

If Bloc members claim that western farmers are treated better and even enjoy an unfair advantage, according to the motion before the House today, why do they not demand instead that farmers and dairy producers be paid three years' worth of subsidies immediately, as compensation for the elimination of milk subsidies? I have yet to see one member of the Bloc request the equivalent of what was offered to western farmers.

Why have they not asked for it, Mr. Speaker? Because dairy producers are better off keeping the remaining 70 per cent of dairy subsidies, as opposed to what was offered western producers.

That is why we did not suggest it and that is why they did not ask for it. In fact, I would not favour this option either. I would rather keep the remaining 70 per cent.

I am not proud of these cuts, Mr. Speaker. No one is glad to lose money. However, we know that sacrifices had to be made to ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural sector and of the whole Canadian economy. Our government made budget cuts, but I do not think it acted unfairly. I am sure it did not want to give anyone an unfair competitive advantage. I would urge the member of the Bloc Quebecois to withdraw the allegation he