

Farm Income

fore, food requirements will increase in coming years, which means that if we really want our farmers to be able to produce enough to feed all Canadians, they will have to invest more, to produce more through higher mechanization, which means higher expenditures. So production costs will increase. Something has to be done. More stability will have to be ensured to young farmers.

I live in a rural area and I must speak to these problems. I meet these people every weekend. I get letters and phone calls and as lately as today, I was asked: "What are you going to do about our quotas? Are you going to do something?" Mr. Speaker, we did fool ourselves. As early as 1955, when I was an active farmer living off the land, I was fighting against a product called margarine that was invading the market. We were asking the government to protect us, to protect our dairy industry against margarine. We were told there was no danger, it was a low-quality product, it was not dangerous, it could never replace butter, and so forth. Well, Mr. Speaker, behind that were big corporations, a powerful organization capable of taking over the market for that product, and today, Mr. Speaker, I am not blaming the consumers.

● (1702)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): I regret to have to interrupt the hon. member but his allotted time has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Thank you. Mr. Speaker. My, such generosity today, how amazing! I thank you and I shall not take advantage of it.

I simply want to say this: we are now paying for our nearsightedness: this product has invaded the market, it now replaces the dairy product. As for the minister, who is listening to me very closely from his seat, I am convinced that deep down he knows that if this year, when the next dairy year is announced, and I hope he will announce the policy very soon and there will be improvements instead of condemnations, the consumption of dairy products has decreased, it is precisely because more dairy produce substitutes are consumed, and today, that is a well-established fact on the market, prices have gone up. Margarine is just as expensive as butter. So what should we do? I should like to propose something, Mr. Speaker. It is nothing new, it was done under a minority government and gave concrete results. Under a minority government, there was a discount policy for the consumption of whole milk. It does not sound like much, a nickel a quart, but when you add up all the quarts, millions of dollars have been paid in discounts to Canadian families for the consumption of whole milk.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why we could not return to that policy because it was a human policy and it would be beneficial to families with several children. I understand that are converting to the metric system. Today it is called a litre. It is eight ounces less than a quart, so at 5 cents that would represent a substantial discount for families. So as not to overburden the neighbour, he may not have any children but in the present system we must still pay for the discount the other one is getting, since we have a higher gross national product and there is a lack of income available to families to be able to increase production made by Canadians and for Canadians, that is where the discount mechanism comes in. This discount mechanism could be paid by new credit, not by chartered bank borrowings, not by taxes on individuals, but by credit created and minted by the Bank of Canada and made available to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and the Canadian Dairy Commission.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) were telling us not long ago that the purchasing power had to be increased to stimulate consumption and restore balance in this country. I share their view but with different means. Instead of increasing the purchasing power of people who really need it by taking it out of the pockets of those who do not really have enough of it, let us rather increase the purchasing power of those families with new credit made available by the Bank of Canada. I will never give up on that because I am so convinced, Mr. Speaker, that this must be the instrument to bring about the increase in the money supply in this country based on industry and work. This seems to me to be so logical. Why go and borrow water from the neighbour's well when we have a good well full of good water? Why pay someone something to be able to use it when we have what we need at home and without hurting the other fellow?

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that is elementary logic, and that is why I say, in closing, that in the interest of Canadians, agriculture must be protected, our farmers must be encouraged to remain on the land and continue to work and produce the food required to meet people's needs; but, in return, let us try to ensure them a stable income, a decent worker's wage. If we adopt such policies, Mr. Speaker, we can be sure that generations to come will be grateful to those who, today, have the courage to grab the bull by the horns and straighten out our economic system by protecting the basic industry, the most essential in our country, namely, agriculture, and in the case of Quebec, the dairy industry.

● (1712)

Mr. Yves Caron (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): First of all, I should like to tell the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) that we, on the government side, share his concern for Canadian agriculture and that, together with the Department of Agriculture, we are constant-