

*The Budget—Mr. A. Lambert*

Consequently, producers are not the only ones to benefit from the money spent on subsidies to the dairy industry; consumers do too. I ask the government as soon as possible to revise its decision on the dairy policy and to increase the subsidies in order to guarantee dairy producers a better income, considering the higher production costs. The government should follow the suggestions offered in the numerous briefs submitted both to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and to the minister himself. Let there be swift action in order to prevent many dairy producers from going bankrupt.

During 1963 and 1964, the last years for which figures are available, the approximate average grant paid to the dairy industry under farm programs amounted to \$28 per capita in the United States and \$16 in the United Kingdom, while in Canada it only amounted to \$11. We have therefore not overdone it in that field.

Since more than 50 per cent of Canada's dairy production is concentrated in Quebec, it is obvious that this province will be most affected by the reduced grant for dairy production. I do not really believe that the government wishes to hurt Quebec or to punish it, but just the same, it is that province which is the most penalized and which suffers the most from the dairy policy.

This attitude does not help to establish an atmosphere of trust and understanding in Canada. I think that at the present time it is more important to solve our economic problems and be fair to all the regions of the country than to lose some valuable time speaking of the constitution. If, with the best constitution that it is possible to have, part of our population is starving, will we be happier? Is that prosperity?

Mr. Speaker, our people are not less intelligent than others. In reading newspapers and analysing the situation, they have learned that the central government is preparing—as a matter of fact, it is all over and the decision is almost final, unless they listen a little to us—to reduce by \$10 million the funds earmarked for subsidies to industrial milk production, while at the same time they are granting farmers in another part of the country over \$100 million to get them to reduce their acreage. Well, some people are ready to exploit every such occasion to play the East against the West and the French Canadians against the English Canadians and they will take advantage of the situation, and this will have an adverse effect on the country as a whole.

I therefore feel that because of all this we should stop to think before deciding whether really we should fight inflation at the expense of good-will between the eastern provinces, particularly Quebec, and the others.

On behalf of the 25,000 people who signed the petition I had the honour to table in the House, I ask the Minister of Agriculture to convince his colleagues of the cabinet that so many people cannot possibly all be wrong, that the responsible people who run farm organizations cannot all be wrong, and only the minister be right. If we really want an active democracy, we must at all costs take into consideration the recommendations of intermediary agencies such as the C.F.Y., the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Dairy Farmers and the Federation of Industrial Milk Producers of the Province of Quebec.

I assure the minister that he can depend on the full co-operation of our group in order to bring farm income up to that in the other sectors of the economy; that is something in which he sincerely believed in the past. As for us, it does not matter whether the political merit goes to the government or the opposition. Our opinion is that we must act quickly to release the "price-cost" vise which is now choking even the better off farmers.

Perhaps I will be told that it is easy for the opposition to criticize. I am convinced I have offered constructive criticism and also that I have made realistic suggestions. From the three roles: that of the opposition, that of the government or that of the industrial milk producers, I am convinced that the milk producers' role is the most difficult one.

During the February 19 debate on the dairy industry, I purposely avoided speaking about the report from the Standing Committee on Agriculture because my opinion was that this report should be examined by the House shortly. But since this report has not been studied as yet, I would call to the attention of the Minister of Agriculture a recommendation I have made before the committee. In fact, as reported at page 12 of issue No. 10 of the Minutes of Proceedings of the committee, my proposal went as follows:

The Committee recommends that the budget of the Canadian Dairy Commission be increased so as to guarantee to underquota producers registered at the Canadian Dairy Commission who have not exceeded their quota an income for 100 pounds of milk equal to that of 1969-70 increased by a sufficient amount to compensate for the annual increase of 5% to the cost index of goods and services.