

Food Policy

Mr. Whelan: Parliament passed a law allowing poultry producers to make representations to the government, to say if they want to come under the national farm products marketing act. The poultry producers of this nation followed the proper procedure and held hearings across the country. They made representations to the Minister of Agriculture and I forwarded those to the cabinet. I say that our food strategy will be a harmonious strategy worked out by myself, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and other ministers concerned. One of the hon. member's colleagues this morning suggested that we are the people involved in the question. We are very much involved in this strategy paper and will be involved in attempts to make our food strategy work even better.

Mr. McGrath: If that is harmony, you are playing off-key.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has often spoken of oversupply of a commodity, but I think neither he nor the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs considered the question of undersupply. The minister said we can increase the production of certain commodities by several hundred per cent—I forget the exact figure. I ask, what strategy does the government propose to assure supply? Will that strategy penalize producers for underproduction, for not producing enough? For instance, three dairy seasons ago we encountered real difficulty when the production costs of milk supplements and concentrates rose steeply and milk production for the first time in our history actually decreased. Will any part of the strategy ensure certain specific levels of production? Further, does the minister propose to penalize producers who underproduce? So far he has talked about surpluses but not about underproduction.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the production of several commodities is governed by marketing boards. Let us be fair. Federally, we exercise control over the production of eggs and turkeys which come under the National Farm Products Marketing Board. The production of milk comes under the Canadian Dairy Commission established by an act of this parliament. Also, we have the Canadian Wheat Board, established in 1935 by the government headed by R. B. Bennett. However, no action was taken with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board Act until 1948.

Mr. Justice Emmett Hall said in his recently handed down report that the people of western Canada are unanimous in their support of the Canadian Wheat Board, a marketing board. No matter what anyone says, the Canadian Wheat Board is a marketing board. The hon. member sitting on my left said, at the recent dinner held in Toronto honouring him, that he was proud because as a civil servant he had been able to assist farmers. He was speaking of the setting up of the Canadian Wheat Board. The hon. member opposite talked of penalties for underproduction. Underproduction of what?

Mr. Jarvis: Milk.

[Mr. McGrath.]

Mr. Whelan: I have nothing to do with penalizing for underproduction of milk, as the hon. member knows. There is a milk marketing system in Ontario, and Ontario just went through an election. The Conservative premier did not win the election outright, as he thought he would. I was surprised to note that not one of the party leaders fighting that election mentioned marketing boards, especially since 80 commodities produced in Ontario come under some sort of marketing board. Was this question raised as an issue? The provincial minister of agriculture, Mr. Newman, made a statement on marketing boards. He sent me a copy of it during the election campaign and said, "Gene, I am 100 per cent behind you in what you are trying to do for agriculture. However, that does not mean you have to be that rigid about marketing boards. The options with regard to marketing boards are as varied as the colours of the rainbow. The farmers can make that selection. The hon. member says the producers should make that selection, but do not foist anything on them. The beef producers in western Canada expressed the opinion that they do not want one. No one will foist anything on them as was done in 1935 with the Canadian Wheat Board. It is a fact that that happened at that time.

● (1440)

Mr. Jarvis: What about milk?

Mr. Whelan: Milk is one of the most difficult products in the world to market. In our society we are throwing away food that is very costly to produce. It requires energy to manufacture the machinery, till the soil and do the planting. Even though it takes all that energy, we throw away 300 pounds of food per man, woman and child in all of Canada. We talk about penalizing these people because they do not produce enough. There is nothing in any program for which I would be responsible that would be so ridiculous. I do not know of any provincial program that penalizes if they are short of production. They are penalized at the bank.

Mr. Jarvis: Mr. Speaker, the minister has given a speech. I will not ask for equal time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Of course, there is unlimited time in this question and answer period. It is all right for the minister to say he does not want to take the time of the House, but I think he has had adequate time. We want to get on to the regular proceedings. I will permit one last question.

Mr. Jarvis: The minister knows full well that had it not been for the Ontario Milk Marketing Board, production would have dropped substantially because of the threat of the lower quota. Do not let him tell me or anyone else that marketing boards have not been penalized for underproduction. That is absolute nonsense. The minister used milk as an example. I will use the same example. The minister says he has no control in the province of Ontario or any other province. Every cheddar cheese plant in Ontario is short of milk. The minister is aware of the figures; they are available in his department. How can he say there has been overproduction, when cheddar cheese plants in my constituency and those of my friend to my