

Supply

Protection Act. That ended federal support to the dairy industry, since this industry was excluded from the new agreement.

In its November 1992 budget speech, the Conservative government announced its intention to reduce by 10 per cent the level of subsidies to the dairy industry, and to apply similar reductions to all subsidies and payments to the agricultural sector.

Starting with the August 1, 1993 dairy year, and following that decision, the federal government therefore reduced payments to dairy producers from \$6.03 down to \$5.43 per hectolitre. This is tragic.

So, this Liberal government simply had to confirm the agricultural policy of the Conservatives to gain authority to set the subsidy at \$5.43 per hectolitre, starting with the April 1994 to March 1995 fiscal year. The more things change, the more they remain the same.

The Conservatives used to run things and now the Liberals are in office, but things have not changed at all. I am really amazed when I read the government's objective in Part II of the Main Estimates 1995-96, under Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canadian Dairy Commission, on page 2-8, and I quote: "To provide efficient producers of milk and cream with the opportunity of obtaining a fair return for their labour and investment and to provide consumers with a continuous and adequate supply of dairy products of high quality". Is this what a 15 per cent cut in revenue a year will achieve? No.

How inconsistent can the government get? It is as if milk producers are not efficient and are obtaining too high a return for their labour and investment. Go work on a farm for a week and you will see how tough it is, how long the days are in an industry where working hours are not tallied up. Worse still, with this statement, the government is trying to reassure us that the supply of dairy products will not be affected and that consumers will even be able to benefit from this decrease in consumer price. And there you have it. A little something for everyone. What arrogance.

I have a final point to make today.

• (1300)

Why is the federal government, the Liberal government, on the one hand, providing a package of transition measures to the tune of \$1.6 billion for owners of prairie farm land in Western Canada because it is terminating the freight-rate subsidies, but on the other hand, is implementing no such transition measures for Quebec farmers? Why have Western producers been given an advantage over their Quebec counterparts?

Why does the federal government always apply a double standard when it has to protect the interests of English-speaking Canadians. Is that not just another sign that Canada is in fact

made up of two countries? Is that not a sign that there are two countries in Canada, one in eastern Canada and one in western Canada? The issue is not related to racism, but to the fact that we have always had two different policies, since agriculture is not the same in these two different regions. When we look at things, we realize that Quebec has always been put at a disadvantage.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the speech made by the member for Shefford on the impact of the dairy subsidy reduction on farmers was most interesting, but I would like some clarifications. According to my calculations, is it not possible that the elimination or the reduction of this subsidy might result in an increase of up to 30 cents in the price of a pound of butter? Again, it is the working poor who would be hardest hit by such an increase.

For someone who earns \$50,000 a year, a 30 cent increase in the price of butter is no big deal, but for a single parent who earns \$10,000, \$12,000 or \$15,000 a year, having to pay 30 cents more for each pound of butter makes a big difference. Is this not what might happen so that, in the end, it is the consumer who will have to pay the price, which means that low-income Canadians will be more directly affected than others?

Mr. Leroux: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I can only tell members of this House that dairy producers will obviously feel insecure. Other agricultural producers also have their own problems, but I wanted to talk specifically about dairy producers today since we have agreed that we should discuss all sectors of the agricultural industry. In this sector, there will be a 15 per cent decrease in revenues, which means, of course, that prices might or certainly will increase.

I would also like to tell you that farmers, including dairy and other producers, often have to keep investing and taking risks after working for so many years, hoping for better things to come. Before the farmers came the pioneers who cleared the land on which our country is built, and we always had two agricultural policies in Canada because we always had two completely different systems.

As I was saying earlier, Canada and Quebec have two different systems. Once we recognize that fact, it will be much easier to negotiate. I think that Quebec has always been disadvantaged compared to western Canada, and we have the figures to prove it. I am not saying that western producers do not have any problems. Of course they have very serious problems, but so do dairy and other producers in Quebec and they cannot be left at a disadvantage.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 43(2), I would like to indicate to you that Liberal members will be sharing their allotted time for the rest of the day. Sir Winston Churchill once made in the British House of Commons the following remarks which the Chair did not find unparliamentary: "The opposite of the truth has never been expressed more accurately". That is exactly what I think of the remarks made by the hon. member I just heard.