

passed, I hope this agreement will not set the pattern. Many members from other parts of Canada will insist that the two major provinces should not set the pattern for the sale and subsidization of agricultural products in other parts of Canada. There must be negotiation with all the provinces concerned before an agreement is signed and approved by the government.

I do not think this agreement is good enough. I appreciate the difficulties, but I have strong reservations about the minister's statement that, because an agreement has been reached between the government and the two largest provinces, possibly in due time the other provinces will enter into the same or a similar agreement. The day before yesterday a cream shipper in my province spoke to me about the size of the deductions. The livelihood of many people depends on this policy. I hope serious consideration will be given to the producers of the other provinces. Although the two provinces that have signed the agreement represent 80 per cent of the production, the other 20 per cent is very important to a large number of farmers.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I should like to comment briefly on the statement which the hon. Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) has just made. I had been looking forward to hearing this statement for a number of weeks in the hope that it would announce changes in the area of collection. In short we are just changing collectors since instead of the Canadian Dairy Commission boards and producer organizations are going to do the collecting.

I had also hoped for improvements in price levels.

For three years the dairy industry has been the subject of many discussions between the producers on one side and the government on the other side, not only the present government but also its predecessors as well as the provincial governments.

A lot has also been written about this important industry. For a long while, we have had to contend with the writings of some newspapermen like, for instance, Mr. Jean Simoneau, of the Sherbrooke Tribune. This man was making statements even before the House could learn about the issues and this was absolutely against the rules. This same man has disparaged all of us federal members. We were dragged out into the streets like dirty pigs, like headless animals, during the demonstration which took place in Sherbrooke. Yet, God knows how earnestly we exerted ourselves to improve the lot of industrial milk producers. We worked hard to have certain regulations passed, to obtain a better legislation, to extend the consumer markets wherever possible. People do not seem to be aware of the efforts we made with a view to improving the situation.

Mr. Speaker, the dairy industry is vital to the province of Quebec, even though a lot of farmers—thousands in fact—have been obliged to give it up because of the lack of income. Today, we were hoping for a statement on an improvement in the field of prices.

Dairying Industry

I remember that for several weeks the Committee on Agriculture has been studying this important question of the dairy industry. We heard knowledgeable witnesses. Serious briefs were submitted and interesting suggestions were made which we might implement. All this has been put aside; we let time slip by with the idea that things would settle, so that small producers disappeared one after the other. Our organizations, our industrial milk producers had undertaken to reduce production even in the face of an increased demand by the consumers. Since consumption is tied to the purchasing power of the public, the demand is smaller. So our producers have accepted with difficulty and reluctantly to lower production in line with purchasing power of the masses and the possibilities of the market. At that time we get the promise that, if we could reduce production down to the suggested level, there would be an improvement in prices.

In his statement, the minister said that the agreement signed today would be effective as of December 1, 1970. In my opinion, it would have been possible—and I make the request while it is not too late—considering improvements in the field of exports and the reduced production, to make it retroactive to April 1, 1970. The milk production for the full year 1970-71 would have been covered and there could have been considerable improvements in the revenue as well as a smaller penalty against those who had surpluses.

In any event, I urge the Minister of Agriculture to keep on working to improve the situation so that the few producers who are still active get the greater returns to which they are entitled. I insist because I know the situation. Every day I get letters in my office from people asking that everything possible be done to improve the situation.

I would like, contrary to my habit, make a slight digression, Mr. Speaker, if you allow me—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. member makes his digression, I must remind him that under the rules, the remarks of a party spokesman, following a minister's statement, must be brief. The hon. member stated at the beginning that he would speak briefly. He indicated then and there that he might be out of order. I would invite him to conclude his remarks as soon as possible.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I usually follow your advice and I shall do so today. I am respectful of the standing orders.

The digression is this, and I make it without malice. It happens that members of my party represent rural ridings. Some organizers with or without malice say that the dairy industry is in a fix, it is because those ridings are represented by Creditistes. Now, the Minister of Agriculture himself is a Creditiste—

Mr. Speaker: Order, I take it for granted that the hon. member has finished his digression and is about to conclude his remarks.