

be tempted to think so. The direct result of his policy is that a vital Quebec industry is now confronted with nearly insurmountable problems.

It is therefore not surprising that when the new dairy policy was announced, the Quebec Agricultural Producers' Union and the Canadian Association of Dairy Producers expressed their anger and their frustration.

**Mr. Pelletier:** You were in Florida!

**Mr. Wagner:** I think this is a personal attack from the parliamentary secretary (Mr. Pelletier). I would like to advise the hon. member that I was absent from the House at that time on my doctor's instructions. I would have preferred to be here to face the government's unfair decisions.

The APU's publication, "Terre de chez-nous" judiciously pointed out, and I quote:

In its national dairy policy, the government seems much more concerned with applying restrictions than promoting the establishment of a strong policy to protect both the dairy industry and the producer.

The milk producers from Quebec alone will lose this year, with this new policy, around \$30 million. Not unlike the APU, one may fear that many dairy farms will be deserted and that many producers, particularly the younger ones, will go bankrupt, with all the economic and social consequences that such a disaster may cause. The Minister of Agriculture does not seem to be aware that his solution, namely the gradual integration of farm production in Quebec, does not meet the specific requirements of my province whose soil is generally poor and unsuitable for diversified agriculture.

In fact, in Quebec, 70 per cent of some 23,000 farm producers operate dairy farms. One sees therefore how hard a blow the new dairy policy will deal the economy of my province. The problems of the Quebec farmers and their colleagues in other provinces are compounded by the decision of the government to allow imports of 50 million pounds of cheese, without that same government having attempted to obtain, especially from the European Common Market, reciprocal treatment for Canadian dairy products.

Of all the requests made to the minister by the dairy producers, he has accepted only one in its entirety: he kept the subsidy at \$2.66 a hundredweight. He did, theoretically, set a \$1.45 price guarantee for industrial milk but, through the play of deductions, the minister in fact reduced the subsidy by half, not to mention the fact that he doubled, by increasing them from \$0.65 to \$1.35 a hundredweight, export fees on powdered milk. One therefore understands the ire of the dairy producers to whom the government refused true indexing of their production costs, a privilege granted other industrial sectors. One can therefore state in all fairness that the government's new dairy policy is a complete disaster for Quebec agriculture.

Those difficulties are heightened even more by the protracted conflict between Treasury Board and the veterinarians working for the government. I am told there are now 140 openings for veterinarians in the federal administration, and resignations are many among those experts who are indispensable to the health of both the public and our cattle. I therefore trust, Mr. Chairman, that

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the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Agriculture will join in their efforts to solve the problem, and thus ensure Canadian agriculture services that are necessary in every regard.

Before I resume my seat, I should like to call the attention of this House to two problems: one of a local nature and the other of a moral and economic nature. The Saint-Hyacinthe area is located in what is called the Montreal plain, the heart of the Quebec farming industry. The time has come for the federal government to reach an agreement with the Quebec government in order to lay the foundations of an integrated agricultural food industry. I urge particularly the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard) who, I know, sympathizes with Quebec agriculture, and particularly in the area comprising the Saint-Hyacinthe riding.

The Montreal plain is already an important centre of vegetable and fruit farming; it compares with others as concerns large scale farming and feed grain production. It has a dairy industry of high potential and cattle production is possible on a large scale. In order to create this integrated agricultural food industry out of the basic elements we already have, it is essential first to zone farm lands in order to protect them against increasing urbanization. But some thought should also be given—and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion could play a role in this—to concentrate in that area those industries which depend on agriculture. I am thinking of processing plants, fertilizer or feed mills, farm equipment industries or even, if possible, of tanneries. As it already have a sugar beet refinery and a famous veterinary school, the Montreal plain and the Saint-Hyacinthe area might also become a centre of specialized farm teaching that could give employment to its graduates on farms or in plants processing farm products or by-products.

The other problem is of a moral, economic and administrative nature. It is the supply management problem as regards hunger in the world. While millions of men suffer from malnutrition, countries like ours periodically cut their food production because of a shortage of markets or of adequate mechanisms to help the famished.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the generous efforts made by Canada to help the hungry, but I am convinced—and the dairy policy is a good example—that the Canadian contribution to food assistance is still totally inadequate. In spite of our efforts and those of other industrialized countries, the fact is that the wealth of some people compared to the poverty of a great majority of human beings is a social scandal that should trouble our conscience.

Mr. Speaker, the disproportion between the wealth of some people and the distress of others should prompt us to find an answer without delay to the problem of assisting the famished. It is still the best way to ensure peace and stability in the world. Until we have learned to give without receiving, we shall not have put into practice that universal solidarity which is one of our national goals.

● (2020)

[*English*]

**Mr. Whelan:** Mr. Chairman, there have been three or four speakers so far. Some of them have asked questions and others have made statements, as did the hon. member