

Agricultural Products Board

regular dairy products is good for the general health of the people of Canada. I do not believe there is anything that can take the place of good wholesome dairy products, whole milk, butter, cheese and so on.

As we decrease our ability to produce these products in Canada we are bound to decrease our ability to maintain our health standards. If the government want to increase breeding herds I suggest that they have got to subsidize butter and cheese. I do not see any alternative. They have got to subsidize the production of butter and cheese to the point where it will at least be remunerative to the producers of these products to continue and increase their production, and to increase their herds and breeding stock. Otherwise the present decline is bound to continue. It is quite evident from what is going on that producers are not going to increase production at present prices, and it is also quite evident that the consumer is not prepared to pay more than he is paying today for these products.

I agree with those who have stated, as the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth has said, that the consumer is spending dollars for food that will not bring him the same amount of food value as the same amount of money spent on dairy products, even at higher prices than they are bringing at the present time. Nevertheless we must recognize the fact that consumers are not prepared to pay more than they are paying at the present time. At present prices they are reducing their consumption, and if prices go higher what is going to happen to the consumption of these products? There will be a switch to substitutes. I think this is one place where a government subsidy could work to good effect. I think the government should subsidize the production of butter and cheese to the point where producers will continue to produce and maintain their herds and breeding stock. Otherwise I see no alternative but a continued decline in our production, and Canada will become an importing country so far as some of our dairy products are concerned.

As I said before, if we do that we will reduce the ability of our whole milk producers to obtain the necessary breeding stock to maintain their herds and to continue their production of whole milk for our trade. Last winter in many places in Canada, not only in the larger cities but also in some of the smaller towns, particularly in western Canada, whole milk was being made out of powdered milk to supply the whole milk trade. Not enough whole milk was being produced in many rural areas, let alone large city areas, to meet the demand. This situation is bound to continue unless the government

are prepared to do something about it. I think the setting up of this board is a step in the right direction. When it is set up I hope that under it the government will do more than it has been doing to date to support the dairy industry of Canada which is so important to our economy and the health of our people.

Mr. Robert Fair (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth (Mr. Charlton) and the hon. member for Melfort (Mr. Wright), we in the Social Credit group are pleased that the minister has moved this resolution today and is basing upon it a bill which he expects to introduce in the near future. He has given an outline of some of the duties of the board, and in order to transact necessary business we feel that the board should be set up. In fact when I heard recently that the government had bought some butter I wondered what agency had been used to make that purchase. Having been told by the minister that a board has been set up by order in council I believe I now have a reply to that question.

I think many people in Canada misunderstand our whole agricultural program. We are going to set up a committee to deal with things that are costing too much and I submit that it would be only right to set up a committee to find out why the prices of agricultural products are as low as they are at the present time. It is true that the index for agricultural products has risen considerably since 1943 or 1944, but many people do not realize that the base period of 1939 was a period in which we were obtaining depression prices. The result is that the index is not accurate because we were not even getting the cost of production at that time. I was surprised at a statement made on October 17, 1951, by the hon. member for Quebec-Montmorency (Mr. LaCroix), who is reported on page 147 of *Hansard* as having said:

Until recently, horses slaughtered in Quebec were used in the manufacture of glue; henceforth, people in the poor and medium classes who make up the majority of wage earners in Quebec will have to eat horse meat because of the great care taken not to incur the disfavour of electors in western Canada, not by one group only but by all political parties represented in the house.

I beg the government to act without delay to put a stop to this situation whereby the people of western Canada force the inhabitants of the east to eat horse meat.

I want to deny emphatically that the people of western Canada are asking the people of Quebec or any other province to eat horse meat. That is entirely their privilege. We are not dictating to them what they shall eat, but we are endeavouring to the best of our ability to supply the highest grade product