

*Government Orders*

This past weekend, I met one of these farmers, who estimates that his quota is worth \$750,000. Three quarters of a million dollars and he is afraid that when the tariff system is well in place, quotas will lose their value. Quotas could eventually disappear.

• (1320)

I have been asking the same question to Agriculture Canada officials week after week. I even asked the agriculture committee and I was told: "Time will tell. One thing is sure: no problem is to be expected for the first six years". But what about the seventh year or the tenth? When a farm producer has borrowed huge amounts to buy this piece of paper allowing him or her to have 25 or 30 more cows but is told: "Look, ten years from now, your \$750,000 quota may not be worth a penny", is that reassuring? Would you find it encouraging, Mr. Speaker, if you were told: "Your pension plan that you have accumulated here, at the House of Commons, will not be worth a penny, six or seven years down the road"? This is hypothetical. It may be worth something, but then again it may not. You would be concerned, I am sure you would.

Farm producers need reassurance. When you see a farmer with a production quota worth \$1.5 million or \$2 million and they come and tell him: "We expect no problem for the first six years. Later on, we will have to see", take my word for it, supply management becomes awfully important.

On predatory pricing, I cannot say that I share the views of my colleague from the Reform Party, which reflect a lack of knowledge of the situation in Quebec. To get a one cent per litre increase, milk producers have to go before a Quebec government agency called dairy commission where consumer associations, the farm producers association and the Dairies' Association are represented, and negotiate. "Our production costs are such and such, and there has been no increase in the past six months to a year". Consumers say that milk already costs too much and that its price should be reduced, not increased. Farmers want a five-cent increase. And then you have UPA representatives trying to come up with a compromise. Finally, farmers ask for a five-cent increase and often get only a one-cent increase.

So, if you come to Quebec or to Ontario, you will realize that farmers do not work 40 hours a week and then rest. They usually work seven days a week, 365 days a year, along with all their family, and still cannot afford to spend three weeks or a whole month in Florida or in Europe. They have to stay on their farm to operate it.

I would now like to give my view of the outlook for supply management. Of course, I would like the government to stand up and tell us what will happen to supply management six or seven years down the road. Farmers have the right to know. In fact, they represent the class of workers in Quebec for whom we

should have the most respect. According to statistics for all of Canada, the people who work on farms are those who work the highest number of hours in Canada.

On average, Quebec farmers work more hours than other Canadian farmers, precisely because we have a more diversified agriculture.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a brief comment.

I am a bit overwhelmed by the very eloquent speech that we just heard from the hon. member for Frontenac. My colleague focused on what was, I think, the main problem for Canada in the Uruguay Round, namely the double talk used by the federal government in trying to protect the interests of producers in Canada and Quebec, those of grain producers from the western provinces on one hand and those of poultry and dairy farmers and other producers on the other hand.

• (1325)

It must be said that this double talk, this double standard still exists today. The problem is still there and it became obvious when we asked the government very recently, as my colleague was saying, which rules would have precedence, the NAFTA rules or the GATT rules, with regard to tariffs on dairy products, poultry, etc.

The problem that exists right now is related to the fear of seeing that western grain production will be played off against Quebec's egg, milk and poultry production in future negotiations with the United States. At the present time, the United States imposes limits on Canadian grain imports and the Canadian government could very well be tempted to reduce the tariffs that will be imposed on Quebec's agricultural products in the place of quotas in order to obtain greater access to the American market.

The Canadian government could be tempted to reduce its tariffs in order to open the American market to Canadian grain. The danger is there and the double talk to which the hon. member for Frontenac was referring still exists. It is important to note that we are well aware of the problem and that we will watch the government very closely on this issue.

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the hon. member for Verchères, is absolutely right. This reminded me of what my Reform Party colleague said earlier about high prices.

I went shopping with my wife on Friday evening and I saw Prince Edward Island potatoes at a price which was exceptionally high for the season. Three years ago, there was an oversupply of potatoes in New Brunswick. The Canadian and New Brunswick governments of the time bought the potatoes to bury them in an open dump. On the CBC news, they showed us hundreds and hundreds of thousands of tons of potatoes being bulldozed