

Dairy Policy

ment agency over which Parliament has practically no control at all, an agency that is distributing money around the world without interest, while our producers here are penalized under the pretence of overproduction, while two thirds of the people of the world die of hunger.

Mr. Speaker, that is an utter paradox. I believe the government, not only as Canadians but as Christians, should start now setting up a distribution system for milk products and by-products. Our products are of very high quality and we should not be ashamed of them. Let us distribute them in those countries, so that the people there may also have a healthy, protein-rich diet and get back on the road to good health.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a basic point. The scandal in fact is the scandal of production. An individual who produces is penalized because he over produces, because he is too efficient, while two thirds of the world is literally starving to death. One only has to attend the conferences, one only has to visit those countries, one only has to read on the subject to realize it.

The government is making every possible effort to sell wheat. Every now and then, in the evening, on television, you can see the minister boast that he sold a few bushels of wheat to some countries. I do not remember seeing a minister boasting on television or radio about selling some of our surplus milk to other countries. I do not recall any instances. The government rather hides behind the European Economic Community and handle its little business there in the interests of those countries and at the expense of our producers.

Mr. Speaker, I think those things must be said and this afternoon the Minister of Agriculture, both as a Canadian and as a christian, cannot turn down this request to ensure the sharing of wealth throughout the world, particularly surplus food.

The fourth point we want to make is the following: That the milk subsidy as a general principle—and we are not talking about figures, we could produce lots of them but we want to stick to general principles—that the milk subsidy be increased in proportion to the reduced quota, if the government wants to reduce the quota.

If the government rejects this principle then the producers will take a drop in income, they will have to slaughter several of their cattle because we already have overproduction. Therefore, I urge again the minister that the milk subsidy be increased in the same proportion as the quota is reduced. The same proportion means a minimum and that amounts in my opinion to taking into account the minimum increase of 10 per cent, as provided in the anti-inflation act.

We are asking in addition—and I think that once again many members of all political parties agree with us—we are asking that a distribution program of milk products and by-products be setup in our Canadian schools, considering the food value of those natural products.

Mr. Speaker, several studies have shown that our children eat badly in our schools in Canada. They have shown as well that the health of our school children was poor. Considering the value of a product such as milk, there is no reason why it should stay in storage and why it should not be distributed to the pupils of our schools, and to our

children. After all, we are the ones paying for their education, building those schools, making our children and producing the milk. I do not see why all this could not be combined in our schools in order to meet once again, and this is our principle, the needs of our people.

I want to conclude with this remark in order to give other members the opportunity to speak, but this is the spirit that we would like to see in today's debate, in order for our production to meet the needs of consumers, but not at the expense of producers. Whenever the government has asked the producers, either in difficult times or in wartime, to ensure the necessary food supplies to meet the needs of the people, they have never refused. All they have asked, after having invested on their farmers to increase the production, at the government's request, is to be able to pay off their debts and live on their farms with their families.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Canadian people and of my colleagues, I respectfully urge the minister not only to formally promise to help the interest of consumers with its dairy policy but to take all the necessary concrete measures to do so.

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I take part in the debate this afternoon and I would like to congratulate my friends of the Social Credit Party of Canada for having responded to the needs of the Dairy Producers Federation, and in particular of Quebec producers, and for having brought up such an important question in the House just before the new dairy campaign is announced at the beginning of April.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) made some very appropriate comments. I believe he did so with all due objectivity concerning the problem which dairy producers have been facing for much too long. I know that the minister will have the opportunity later on to reply perhaps not to the arguments, but at least to the recommendations and representations that we are making. I expect that we will hear that Canada has the greatest and the most productive cows in the world, but dairy producers still have rather serious problems.

Also, when the government or the minister responsible say that they have made great efforts to improve the dairy industry, we recognize that they have indeed made some effort, that they have placed credits and certain services at the disposal of dairy producers, but we must also recognize the commitment and investment risks of producers who agreed, first of all, to meet a real need for efficiency, and to make the industry profitable while providing some stability for the Canadian dairy industry.

Mr. Speaker, this industry is quite interesting when we consider how dairy producers have reacted to the services given to them by the government. However, it would be too easy to accept today that the government leave the producers with the same problems that they have been facing so long. The government is always saying: Yes, we are making some efforts and we have helped the producers enormously by urging them to organize. They have done so, I am sure that they are still ready to cooperate with government policies to the extent that its proposals are reasonable. However, a situation which has lasted too long at the competition level—it was mentioned a while ago—