

*Announcement of Dairy Policy*

a whole ought to assume, and that it should not be placed on the shoulders of an industry which is already very close to being bankrupt.

I hope that before the minister brings this legislation down he will give serious thought to this aspect of the matter. I can see very little value in taking 10 per cent away from dairy producers to subsidize their exports. If the minister were prepared to recommend that his colleagues give some thought to subsidies out of general revenue he would be going much further to help in the export of dairy products.

[Translation]

**Mr. C. A. Gauthier (Roberval):** Mr. Speaker, for several weeks now we had been looking forward to the statement made this afternoon by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene). The minister notes that the national consumption of butter exceeded the production, and he mentions it at the outset. I trust this will open the eyes of agricultural organizations across Canada and particularly in Quebec. When the dairy industry is our main industry, and we realize it cannot even produce enough butter to meet the Canadian demand, agriculture has reached a crucial point and it is time for the minister to give greater assistance to the farmers.

He also stated that in the last few years farmers have quit dairying, for good reasons. First of all, for lack of prices in line with production costs. That, I believe, if the first cause the second being the fact that governments fail to help the farmers soon enough.

A while ago the spokesman for the Conservatives said: "We have been asking these adjustments from the minister for the last 12 months". To my mind, the first to have failed to help the farmers are precisely the Conservative party when they were in power.

We have been asking for this, not only in the last 12 months, but since we came here four years ago. It is not only in the last 12 months that things have been going from bad to worse, on the contrary, for over ten years now agriculture has been on the wane in Quebec. People wonder how this will end up. Prices paid to farmers are far from being what might be called "average", or "equivalent" prices.

There is also another cause, the epidemics which often decimate the dairy herds as has been happening in our area for the past two years. It is absolutely necessary that the minister do something about that. We are

witnessing the disappearance of more than a third of our dairy herds on account of brucellosis. The government has done nothing to increase assistance to farmers whose herds have been decimated by this epidemic. It is absolutely essential that the minister take steps to enable farmers to rebuild their herds and bring their production to the level at which it should be in the province of Quebec.

At long last something is announced that all farmers—with the Catholic Farmers' Union at the forefront—have been asking for, a price of \$4 per hundredweight for manufacturing milk.

On the other hand, there is in the statement one part I do not relish, the one which speaks of producers' average net returns. There is still talk of "average". The Catholic Farmers' Union has always called for a \$4 per hundredweight minimum price. The famous \$3.50 average price paid last year never gave the producers \$3.50 but \$3.10, \$3.05. The minister must correct this part of his statement to read: the minimum price is \$4 per hundredweight for consumption milk.

I congratulate the minister, particularly when he states that the federal payments will apply to that part of the surplus of fluid milk. This policy was imperative in the province of Quebec because of the many producers of fluid milk, who, without help or subsidy, had to sell the rest of their milk as manufacturing milk.

I also congratulate the minister on having hurried, as I mentioned to him the other day that this matter had to be dealt with this year. I think the farmers will be very happy for everything is mentioned aside from the small lack which I pointed out at the beginning. However, I thank the minister for his fine effort and I hope that this will continue so that the farmers will be treated fairly and be able at least to meet the demand of the country.

• (3:20 p.m.)

[English]

**Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to comment briefly on the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture. At the outset I want to say we welcome this announcement respecting a national dairy policy or national dairy price policy, if I may put it that way because, as mentioned in the statement, the national dairy commission has not yet been set up. The minister indicated that he intended to bring in legislation during this session for that purpose, but that has not yet been done.