

*Government Orders*

spring that he would not renew the subsidy. His colleague, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, was quick to announce that his department would be responsible for the subsidy and would, we may assume, make it more effective by making certain changes.

Since that time, the minister has asked the Producer Payment Panel to examine the question. This review led to recommendations about which the minister has not said a word yet. About the Crow's Nest Pass Rates, he told the magazine *Le Coopérateur* last June: "Although this problem has been around for many years, we must, for various reasons, tackle it without delay. Not the least of these reasons is the GATT Agreement".

• (1310)

We, however, still do not know anything about the minister's intentions. It must also be pointed out that Quebec and Canada will benefit from stronger trade regulations. In the last 15 years, several member states, in particular our American neighbour and the European Community, made excessive use of protectionist measures. Clarifying the GATT regulations on the definition of the types of subsidies that are allowed, compensatory or prohibited and the use of countervailing and anti-dumping duties largely favours an international system based on relationships dictated by law rather than force. For smaller states like Quebec and Canada, this strengthening of trade regulations is a safeguard against giants like the United States.

There may be many advantages to an agreement such as the one we are discussing this afternoon. In any case, there is no doubt that, given the internationalization of markets, we must take our place on the international scene and take advantage of trade treaties. Agriculture is only one component of the agreement but its place in Quebec's and Canada's economy does not allow us to minimize the impact of measures affecting this sector. Losing Article XI will require us to restructure our agricultural sector. However, only the future will tell us whether these adjustments were worthwhile. I still think that the grey areas or outstanding problems justify our asking that some aspects of Bill C-57 be clarified in committee.

Furthermore, I find it hard to understand why it is so urgent to conclude this debate when the two giants, the U.S. and Europe, are taking their time. The Americans are moving slowly since some members of Congress are in the middle of an election campaign and this type of agreement is not very popular with voters. Europeans, for their part, have turned this into a power struggle between the European Commission and the Council of Ministers. If this bill is really acceptable, why is it so urgent?

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your attention, and I must again in closing point out that my colleague from Verchères is doing an admirable job of dealing with this matter, for which he is responsible, in order to defend Quebec's major interests.

• (1315)

[English]

**Mr. Ian McClelland (Edmonton Southwest, Ref.):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with considerable interest as the debate has unfolded today. The Bloc speakers have been virtually unanimous in their support of supply management.

Those who are consumers have an opinion of supply management that is somewhat different from the opinion of those who are producers. It depends whether they are getting paid or are paying for the product under supply management. Supply management in any other industry would be considered price fixing.

Could the member comment on his perception in Quebec, leaving aside the relationship between Quebec and the rest of the country? Is it his opinion that supply management is a net benefit and, if it is not a net benefit, given that consumers are paying a premium for dairy products and poultry products their costs of living are greatly increased?

[Translation]

**Mr. Chrétien (Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my distinguished colleague from the Reform Party for his very pertinent question. Nevertheless, as you know, three agricultural sectors in Quebec are covered by supply management: poultry, eggs and milk. Supply management in these three fields is so well structured that every month delegations from the UPA, the Quebec farmers' union, receive invitations from other countries that want to know how we could have set up such an effective supply management system.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that without this supply management system in Quebec and in Ontario, no farmer could make a living from producing poultry, eggs or milk? Why? Because we would have been invaded by the Americans. Last week, the president of the UPA told me that he visited a farm in the United States that raises 100,000 steers a year. A hundred thousand!

He told me that Quebec does not produce 100,000 steers a year. Down there, a single huge farm produces more than Quebec does. But once agriculture in Quebec and Ontario is killed off, prices would not be set by government bodies in Quebec or Ontario but by American farmers. The independence of a country is at stake.

When a country cannot feed its people, it is weak. If we want a strong country, this strength must be based on an agricultural system that is competent, productive and also versatile. Thanks to supply management, farmers enjoyed some security and could invest and acquire farms and make them profitable. As for milk production, because I am more familiar with this field, I could tell my distinguished colleague that some farmers have been bled white. They have mortgaged their farm to buy the right to produce—they have bought quotas.