

Dairy Policy

Speaker, the year the government has allowed doubts to hover over that dilemma and finally it hopes that the producers will accept, as usual, whether they like it or not, higher export costs, because that is surely what will happen.

Mr. Speaker, in view of the production capability of our milk producers and the fact every day the World Food Organization and other groups find that two thirds of world population suffer from hunger, it is nonsensical to hear that in Quebec particularly and in Canada in general, our producers are penalized for being "too efficient".

Nutrition experts are already telling us that the world food reserves are rapidly being depleted and that high-protein foodstuff are becoming more and more scarce. How can we agree then that because of the stupid milk policies of the government which profit, and I emphasize this, financial and commercial interests, how can we agree to restrain our organization and the expansion of our own production in Canada? That is why I say—and I would like to conclude with this so that other members can take the floor—I say that we must not increase the price of milk for consumers. We must rather lower that price in order to increase consumption. It is time for the government to stop trying to be on both sides and burying its head in the sand.

This government should take position once and for all and encourage production but not at the consumers' expense and encourage consumption but not at the producers' expense. Mr. Speaker I think that this afternoon we should ask the government for a proper legislation allowing for a reduction in consumers price through consultation with provincial marketing boards. To encourage milk consumption we should not reduce production when consumption declines. It is nonsensical.

We are asking producers: Reduce your production when consumption declines, increase your production when consumption increases. It is crazy. Ever since I came here every year it is the same kind of argument. We are told about some kind of over production. But where is this over production if at the same time we have an under-consumption, if consumption is declining?

Mr. Speaker, there is no overproduction at this time. The only weakness is with our distribution and marketing system. There is nothing wrong with our production. The minister accuses producers of waste and overproduction. Therefore, the problem does not lie there. Moreover, this government lets the consumer milk price go which reduces the quantity of milk sold affecting once more the producers. For those reasons I think that in 1976, considering the formal commitments he made in 1975, the minister should protect consumers concerning milk price increases. We should reduce consumer milk prices to ensure a larger supply in Canada and allow Canadians to drink the milk we produce in our country and which is of a very high quality while at the same time the government would ensure a "guaranteed" income to producers. Then, we would have peace in agricultural and those excellent products with a high protein content would get to the consumer.

Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, this government will foster a battle between consumers and producers and we shall never get out of it. I think this is a basic point. Once again I call the attention of the minister to this point. It is

important that our production should meet our needs. This is what implies the principle of self-sufficiency mentioned by the minister himself last year.

Mr. Speaker, what about milk distribution in our schools? What has been done in this regard? What is CIDA doing to distribute milk in the world? It is still to come. That method is only used in case of major disasters. However, we are told that we have a surplus.

Within the near future, it will be immoral and dangerous to get rich and try to exploit hungry people. That is more or less what is going on today. All my colleagues, and particularly all members from Quebec, Mr. Speaker, join with me to ask the minister this afternoon, first, to control and to reduce our imports of dairy products and by-products when it is possible to produce them in our country. However, it is not enough to simply advocate that principle.

I know some colleagues opposite who have already said that. I heard them myself. But it is still to come. What we are trying to do by this debate this afternoon is to show the Minister that all eastern producers agree about the necessity of controlling and restricting our imports in order to promote production in Canada.

The second point we want to ask the minister this afternoon is this: to maintain at the 1975 level at least the income of the dairy farmer. If the impending threats are carried out, such as the bombshell of November 4, 1975, the producers' income would drop. In that case, the producers would be the only ones to suffer a loss of income, while the principle of the anti-inflation act is that all workers are entitled to a 10 per cent increase. I think that the minister must first guarantee the producer a 10 per cent increase in income, plus the catching up formula for the loss incurred last year. That is a minimum. It is important.

● (1500)

This government introduced with great fanfare the anti-inflation legislation in this House saying that inflation had to be crushed, that people should exercise restraint. I submit that milk producers most likely are the group of Canadians showing the highest degree of patience and restraint.

Unless it be a provocation on the part of the minister, I do not see why there should be an increase in export costs. This would deprive milk producers of the 10 per cent increase in revenues allowed to every other Canadian worker.

Mr. Speaker, we have no right to fight inflation at the expense of the self-employed milk producers. Let them be recognized as having the same rights as any other group of workers.

Moreover, we ask the minister to foster and increase milk product and by-product distribution in the underprivileged countries of the world through CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency. In a country such as we have here in Canada, a rich country where there is plenty of wheat, milk and milk powder, where we have quality products and an automated industry, where we are able to produce, where we have transportation, where we are capable of shipping our products, there is no reason whatsoever to invest \$1 billion in CIDA, a govern-