

*Milk Producers*

interesting level and people have specialized and have become more knowledgeable as concerns management and administration, and we recognize this fact. We know also that, thanks to the Farm Credit Corporation, funds have been earmarked to help producers get organized. They did, they are prepared to make a living out of that, but there is the matter of inadequate income. I hope the Minister of Agriculture, for whom I have great respect and who is an expert in farm matters, will find solutions. We hope he will find solutions. I remember in April last, the Milk Producers Federation made representations and studies, and presented a brief establishing production costs which called for additional subsidies. They had promised, they were committed to find formulas as good as those the parliamentary secretary talked about a moment ago, on a long enough period to meet the required minimum to prevent the milk producer from vegetating and to ensure a continuity and to get him interested in taking over the family operation.

But we know full well than in April last they did not meet requirements and production costs which had been established and recognized by the Prices Review Board. The government did not meet all the demands of the milk producers and what, as demonstrated by serious studies, were the actual cost. But when the minister promised some changes, the Milk Producers' Federation relied on him and hoped that finally they would get that basic income. I think we must see it that way. But we do know that recently, because of an unexpected situation concerning powder milk, the milk producer happens to be penalized and suffers a direct income lost. And we will never repeat that enough.

Of course we could say that things are not all that bad, our milk producers are better organized, our milking cows also increased their production. Certainly there are plenty of statistics pointing to improvement. But when we talk about essential income to allow those producers to have a decent living, as any other individual in our society, milk producers are far from feeling that secure. And this is why I, as many others, would urge the government if only to reply to the brief they received from FPU, to the representations made by the Dairy Farmers Union of Canada and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

So those organisations are now asking the government to take position and immediate corrective action, that is to say that the government must intervene in a hurry to precede the time when the contribution for the month of July will be reduced and we ask for your support; that is a letter that was sent to all members of this House. We hope the Minister who refused this week to commit himself to an affirmative answer on those briefs will have a change of mind. We also hope that all members of the House will succeed in convincing the minister of the urgency of this situation.

So if we look at the revenues we could have imagined for dairy producers in April last, we are now taking a step backwards when we limit ourselves to say that it is time for the dairy industry to face its responsibilities. I think that it is unfair to leave the dairy industry alone to defend itself against that situation at this time. The European Economic Community took its stand and the Canadian government might take some measures by setting up a

[Mr. La Salle.]

fund, for a given period in any case, to meet and correct that situation, without letting the dairy producer pay for it. It will be understood, of course, that it is not only the government, especially not the Canadian government, which is responsible for an actual situation, but it does not have the right to let the dairy producers fend for themselves.

● (1650)

In my opinion, the request made by the Milk Producers Federation for the immediate withdrawal of the additional 45 cent contribution is fair. The Federation also urges the government to establish a fund to cover the costs of additional export grants which will be necessary for the remainder of the year, that is until March 31, 1976. In the meantime, producers should develop longer term alternatives to cover the export costs of powdered milk. The Federation should arrange without delay special meetings to that end.

Mr. Speaker, once more we will see after a number of years demonstrations by the dairy producers who have done a great deal and have responded in a positive manner to the government measures available to milk producers.

We readily agree that the government has made efforts, but we say that the government's silence with respect to the present difficulties is unacceptable, unfair and offensive to milk producers. I am convinced that not only the parliamentary secretary and other members who are more familiar with this matter will succeed in convincing the minister of the necessity of giving a positive answer to the dairy industry, but also that the minister will manage to get an interesting answer from the cabinet with respect to the establishment of a fund for the period specified in the brief submitted by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, I know some of my colleagues would like to speak on this matter, and I will therefore conclude my remarks.

I should like once again to congratulate the hon. member for Richmond (Mr. Beaudoin) for giving us this opportunity to comment on this delicate situation, and I also hope the minister and all the members of the House will understand how important it is to solve this problem and therefore make it unnecessary for milk producers to hold meetings at the regional and provincial levels and to come to Ottawa, which entails further expenses.

I think those organizations are responsible and their studies and analyses have been carefully prepared. The statistics provided by the parliamentary secretary are not questioned, but no one can come and tell milk producers: You are in a good situation. Hon. members know it is not enough. We ask them to make an extra effort in order to correct an injustice to words milk producers.

I said earlier this week that it was a public lie to dairy producers to talk about the additional subsidy they were granted in April and the deduction imposed to them. We gave them with one hand a grant which, again, did not amount to a sufficient income. Through the bill, we deprive them of an immediate profit with the other hand.

Given the circumstances, and I do not intend to repeat myself, I hope that the government will understand the most difficult situation dairy producers have to face. We talk about stability and development in the dairy indus-