

The Address—Mr. Honey

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON
ADDRESS IN REPLY

The house resumed, from Friday, May 12, consideration of the motion of Mr. Don Jamieson for an address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session, and the amendment of Mr. Diefenbaker, and the amendment to the amendment of Mr. Gauthier.

Mr. Russell C. Honey (Durham): Mr. Speaker, it is traditional in this debate to compliment the mover and seconder of the address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am pleased to do so, not only because it is a traditional gesture but because the mover, the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo (Mr. Jamieson) and the seconder, the hon. member for Nicolet-Yamaska (Mr. Côté), delivered speeches which indicated a great deal of background research and study, and delivered them in a manner fitting the record of responsibility and sincerity they have already established in this house.

• (12:20 p.m.)

In this debate I would like to spend the time available to me in a discussion of the dairy policy of this government, and later to make some suggestions with respect to a school milk assistance program. By and large I think the philosophy of our present dairy policy is good. Some of the details are disturbing, and I will mention them shortly in the hope that the Minister of Agriculture will have an opportunity to reflect on my suggestions.

Before making my suggestions I want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture for the generally good job he has been doing for the agricultural industry in Canada. The minister has obtained the confidence of Canadian farmers as one who is genuinely concerned with their welfare. He is concerned with the income of Canadian farmers as a whole, and he is anxious to bring it up to the standard of all Canadians. He is striving to see that all Canadians, including those in agriculture, should be able to live well, to educate their families and generally share in the good Canadian life which is being made available by this government.

Having said this I want to caution the minister on one point, and I am sure he will accept it in the spirit in which I make it. My words of caution to the minister are that he be careful about putting too much faith in the opinions of his senior officers and advisers. I

[Mr. MacEachen.]

do not say this as a criticism of the abilities or sincerity of the minister's advisers and those who hold office on various boards and commissions. However, I do suggest that these officials on some occasions may not have the practical background in agriculture which leaders of farm organizations possess. If, before announcing the new dairy policy in April, the minister and members of the Canadian Dairy Commission had given greater attention to some of the ramifications of the policy he would not now be faced with the genuine concern being experienced in the dairy industry.

Indeed, the situation we now have is that the dairy policy appears to be in conflict with the policies of other government agencies such as the Farm Credit Corporation and the ARDA administration. For example, to announce suddenly that quotas for manufacturing milk produced in 1967 and 1968 will be based on 1966-1967 production is a serious blow to those producers who have advanced plans to increase their production and move into more economically efficient units. I do not quarrel with the principle of quotas, but I do criticize strongly the practice of dealing with quotas without proper and reasonable notice being given to the producers. We are also told that quotas will be refused to producers who were not in production in 1966-1967. Such a drastic step without reasonable notice to the industry is surely not justifiable.

Another point of criticism I have is the lack of notice to fluid milk producers that the federal subsidy would be cut off almost overnight. I agree that the provincial governments have the essential responsibility in this field. I think, however, it would have been prudent for the federal department to have given the provinces a year in which to assume their responsibility and give notice to all, including the fluid milk producers, that the federal government would continue to pay subsidies to fluid producers in this current dairy year. The producers would then be put on notice that they had a year in which to convince the provincial governments that they should pick up the subsidies, and if the provinces indicate they would not do so the producers would then have a year in which to adjust their production as they might see fit.

In the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal at some length with a matter which is directly related to the dairy industry but with respect to which I wish to direct a generally overriding argument, that of the health of Canadian children. I wish to