

Dairy Policy

which benefited from the generosity or the administrative laxity of those responsible for the control of quotas, which does not come under the Canadian Dairy Commission, but rather under the agencies that my colleague from Compton mentioned earlier.

It is the same every time that the dairy policy is announced for the year. One year, everyone is happy, the next, everyone is unsatisfied. When everyone is happy, no one is said to be responsible for the happiness of dairy producers, but when something goes wrong, someone is held responsible for the misfortunes of dairy producers, and that is the government of Canada or the Canadian Dairy Commission. What we are forgetting is that the Canadian dairy producer, the management committee service and the producer federations all have duties and responsibilities in the administration of this policy.

When things are going wrong, it is not the responsibility level, which must first of all assess the Canadian needs, determine the amount of the subsidies and make the necessary payments, which alone is the culprit, but it must assume the responsibility together with all those who, during the year, must check production, give out or share the quotas of this production among all individuals.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in order to point the finger at the level of all the weaknesses of this administration which jeopardize the dairy policy, I feel that it is essential for the quotas to be published as quickly as possible, in order to determine which producers have remained within their quotas between 1972 and 1977 and which have not unduly exceeded their quotas, and make sure that the over-quota deliveries have not been excessive. If compared with the other producers, there are variations to the level of production, we shall know then truly where responsibilities rest, and tell the federations of producers that, before they place the blame on the shoulders of higher levels of government for the administration of the dairy policy, they ought to properly carry out their own responsibilities, namely the administration of the dairy policy.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes what I had to say on this motion.

[English]

Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte): Mr. Speaker, this is a motion which I find it difficult to support for reasons which have been outlined by the two hon. members to your right who have just spoken. I sympathize with the position of farmers who wish to keep their incomes reasonably confidential, but I submit that at any point at which a complete list of milk quotas is publicized a farmer's income is publicized by the same stroke of the pen. Therefore I find the argument based on confidentiality difficult to support.

The primary purpose of the motion is to deflect criticism away from the Government of Canada and direct it to the various organizations which are responsible for the administration of the milk quota system. It is deflecting criticism on the various organizations in Canada which are responsible for the administration of milk quotas, it is deflecting criticism on the various provincial governments under whose jurisdiction these

organizations operate, and it is doing everything it can to protect the Government of Canada.

● (1742)

If one reviews the history of our milk distribution structure, one finds that up until about 1975 the Government of Canada had neglected the dairy industry to the point where it was virtually bankrupt. It had neglected it to the point that our production in Canada was deficient to the extent that we were importing tens of millions of pounds of butter and establishing quotas for the importation of cheese. At that point in time the dairy industry was on a slide and the bank balances of dairy farmers were nil.

The next step the government took was over-stimulative. It gave the industry too much stimulation. Then the government, by virtue of its inaccurate prediction of the requirements for milk in this country, began to lay blame on everyone but those who had calculated the quotas that they thought could be absorbed. It did not work, Mr. Speaker. In other words, the computer malfunctioned. There was no accurate prediction of what was required in Canada, and the Government of Canada found itself in the very embarrassing position of having to reduce the quotas it had already established.

As a result, the milk farmers found themselves in even worse condition. They had spent the capital required to put them in the position of producing milk to meet the quota the government had suggested in 1975 the country could tolerate.

This leaves the government in the position where it can be properly criticized, first for its neglect, and secondly for its failure to estimate the amount of milk Canada could produce and consume and which the government could afford to support. In view of this total mismanagement and the practicing of both extremes, the federal government is being criticized in Quebec, it is being criticized in New Brunswick, and the industry has felt the power of the purse. The only way the dairy industry in Canada has been able to survive for a good many years is by virtue of subsidies paid by the federal government to maintain the Canadian dairy industry. When we get to the point where we withdraw that subsidy and complaint is expressed, as it has been by the two members to your right, Mr. Speaker, then there is something the matter with the government's dairy policy.

I am quite prepared to have the provinces send the various representatives of the milk industry to the agriculture committee to express their complaints. And let the committee consider those complaints and make recommendations thereafter. If by chance the organizations in Canada want to publish the total list of quotas, then that is their position and we will support it. But out of the clear blue sky, having received no recommendation from any farm organization in Canada that we take this step, I find myself in the position where I am compelled to oppose this motion.

The latest representation I received pertaining to milk is by way of stoical complaint and complete resistance to the government's position that there should be a levy on fluid milk production in the various provinces. One or two provinces have