

intend to revoke the licence of the Canadian Egg Marketing Board?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Egg Marketing Board receives its authority through the governor in council under the farm products marketing legislation. I said in answer to a previous question that because of the type of findings that have been mentioned we are looking into this matter on an urgent basis. I might also add that the Food Prices Review Board findings also refer to the activities of the provincial marketing boards, agencies of the provincial governments.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, in view of the major recommendation of the Food Prices Review Board in its fifth report that the government set up a royal commission to look into this matter, and as this is the very reason for the existence of the Food Prices Review Board, may I ask the minister whether he intends to direct the Food Prices Review Board to carry on such an investigation on its own and not impose any additional charges on the taxpayers of Canada?

Mr. Gray: Mr. Speaker, this is one of the matters we are considering. I am also glad to note that the hon. member has had a personal conversion and now supports the activities of the Food Prices Review Board.

● (1420)

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, it so happens that the Food Prices Review Board has been the only answer this government has had and so far it has been an unsatisfactory answer.

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[Translation]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

INVESTIGATION BY CANADA BEFORE SENDING FOOD TO ETHIOPIA TO RELIEVE ALLEGED SHORTAGE

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a question to the hon. Secretary of State for External Affairs.

It has been revealed recently that there was no food shortage in a certain African country to which Canada, through the Department of External Affairs, has granted funds. Can the Secretary of State inform us if an investigation had been held before granting this aid and if so why was it not serious?

[English]

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I regret that I did not understand the purport of the question. I did not catch the name of the country to which the hon. member was referring.

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: The country referred to, Mr. Speaker, is Ethiopia. An emotional climate has been created in Canada by saying that that country was starving when it is exporting food surpluses. Moreover, it has been provided financial help by Canada.

Oral Questions

Can the minister say if a serious study of the matter was made before granting money to that country?

[English]

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that before any food is provided to Ethiopia or any other country we investigate the need, and we do not provide food where it is not needed.

[Translation]

Mr. Laprise: I have a supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Secretary of State say whether, in those circumstances, the supplies having not yet reached Ethiopia will nonetheless be unloaded or sent elsewhere?

[English]

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, if it is found, contrary to the reports that have been received, that Ethiopia is not in need of food, I can assure the hon. member that there are many other places where food is needed and it will be directed there.

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FOOD PRICES

INCREASE IN EGG PRICES—POSITION OF MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE ON REVIEW BOARD REPORT

Mr. William C. Frank (Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct my question to the Minister of Agriculture. Having regard to the fact that the Food Prices Review Board in its latest report indicated that retail egg prices cannot be justified, I would ask whether the minister agrees with the board's view that Canadian egg producers through their own marketing board's pricing policies are gouging the consumers?

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I have not had time to study the report yet.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that is true. Mrs. Plumtre saw fit to give the report to the press but not to the Minister of Agriculture—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan:—so I have not had an opportunity to study it. I have not received it yet. It has not come across my desk. But I want to say that I have the utmost confidence in the Canadian Egg Marketing Board.

Mr. Frank: Assuming that the minister, after having had a chance to peruse this report, agrees that the consumers are not being gouged by the egg producers' pricing system, will he then consult with his colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, in order to correct the erroneous impression created by the Food Prices Review Board report, which can do nothing but jeopardize the future of Canadian egg producers?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, the minister and I have already had one discussion today and our officials are studying this matter.