

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

month of April, 1,222,609 dozens were imported. In fact, during the first four months of 1969, 2,744,139 dozen eggs were imported.

On the other hand, we exported 140,204 dozens, which leaves a deficit of 2,603,908 dozens. The weighted average price obtained by the Canadian producer, which was 44 cents per dozen at the beginning of January 1969 has kept decreasing steadily and according to the federal statistics, it was less than 34 cents in May. The real situation is still more serious than is indicated by statistics.

Mr. Speaker, several producers have built quite modern henroosts with adequate equipment. They have invested rather large amounts and yet they see, month after month, their profits decreasing and the producer's profit margin is dwindling constantly.

I have here a comparative table on grade A eggs. In 1949, for instance, marketing costs amounted to 18.5 per cent and the producer's share to 81.5 per cent, while in 1966, marketing costs reached 30 per cent, and the producer's share was 70 per cent. It is estimated that in 1969, the situation is even worse.

A study was made to determine as exactly as possible the production cost of eggs on the farm, and this study—Cornwell—has shown that the average cost of one dozen eggs for the farmer was 35.7 cents.

So, Mr. Speaker, it may be inferred from the study I just mentioned, that the hourly salary of the main producer has been established at 67 cents for an adult, and at 57 cents for the others.

● (10:10 p.m.)

During our visit in the Maritime provinces, various briefs submitted to the committee on agriculture deal with this disastrous situation. I think it is our duty to say that in the circumstances, but for reasons I am unaware of, the committee was unable to present a report to the house.

The producers' grievances are very serious, and they are right to complain because in the province of Quebec, for example, egg producers set up cooperatives to market their product. But regardless of the efforts of the directors, Mr. Speaker, successful production planning is impossible for them if the government does not protect them from massive imports.

I explained a minute ago the nature of those imports. The profits of certain categories of businesses increase continually, while the profits in agriculture decrease steadily,

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

whether in the field of farming, poultry farming, truck gardening or dairy production.

For instance, I have here a statement published on May 12, 1969, to substantiate that there are increases in profits in areas other than agriculture.

Gulf Canada: 7 per cent increase in net profits in 1968.

For example, insofar as Bell Canada is concerned:

Operating profits have increased by 10 per cent at Bell Canada.

Mr. Speaker, if operating profits could increase at the same rate in the field of agriculture, I think that Canada would only feel better and we would be able to see that unemployment is less acute, because agriculture creates employment in related industries, for the benefit of the people.

I should like to ask the government, on behalf of those producers who rightly urge the government to take whatever steps are necessary to exert a more effective control over egg imports into Canada, to protect those businesses which really deserve its full attention, so that we may preserve a most essential industry.

The federal government has exclusive jurisdiction on imports. In his letter dated June 25, the Quebec Minister of Agriculture and Colonization informed the president of the C.F.U. that he had spoken to the federal Minister of Agriculture about the problem of egg imports into Canada during the last federal provincial conference of the Agriculture ministers held in Ottawa. The provincial Minister of Agriculture was answering the telegram of June 20 from the C.F.U., which was asking for the provincial government to make representations to the federal government, and stating he had discussed this problem with other provincial ministers.

As we said, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Florian Côté (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question of the hon. member for Bellechasse, may I tell him that I also am deeply concerned with the problem of egg production and imports in Canada.

When the question was brought up, I got together with a few members of the committee on agriculture in order to look into the matter more fully. It must be pointed out that