

really concerned about that because I would like to know how it was taken care of and under what circumstances. How does one get rid of so many eggs, and under what circumstances? I am also concerned about another factor which is very important. The Minister of Agriculture gets into the act and indicates that we are exporting more eggs than we are importing. The *Montreal Gazette* of January 16, 1975, says:

Canada imported about 72 million eggs from the United States last year and, at the same time, exported 156 million, most of them to the U.S., an agriculture department spokesman said yesterday.

This seemingly strange set of circumstances, expected to change this year because of declining American production, results mainly from price differences in the two countries.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the things that really confuses the Canadian public. The minister can say that we are exporting more eggs than we are importing. We imported 72 million and we exported 156 million. The eggs which we imported were table eggs: most of them went on the table in Ontario or in Quebec. But the eggs we exported were breaker eggs at about one-third the price of table eggs. So we are importing eggs for table use and we are exporting eggs for breaker use. It would be of great interest to me and to many other people to find out exactly how we got rid of the large number of eggs we had accumulated in January so that by the end of the month it could be said at the Moncton meeting that there was really no surplus and we were going to embark upon a reduction of the quota. At the same time, we have not been given any indication that quotas are being imposed on the importing of eggs.

I agree with one thing the hon. member for St. John's East said, and that is that the time limit imposed on the committee worked to its detriment. I think the committee did an excellent job. It held 24 public meetings, received 20 briefs and hundreds of submissions, and in those meetings it looked very extensively at the whole problem not only of eggs but of marketing legislation in a federal system. It made a number of recommendations, and I think we have a right to know what happened to them.

● (1610)

One criticism levelled at the Minister of Agriculture is, I think, unfair. I would be very opposed to a national marketing agency over which the minister would exercise the kind of control that is being suggested by some members. An agency should be able to stand on its own feet no matter who the minister is or what situation or emergency develops. So far this agency has not had to handle unexpected emergencies.

It has been suggested that when CEMA was established it had a large surplus of eggs on hand from the provincial marketing agencies, particularly from Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, and the surplus was never properly inventoried; we did not know where it was or what kind of storage it was in. Although it was in no position to take over that surplus, CEMA did take it over and finally eliminated it and now we are in the position where we only meet our requirements. One of the initial problems with CEMA was that it did not have people who were interested in establishing a national agency. Instead, it had people who were interested in being loaned from their own provincial sections to a national agency, to the advan-

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tage of the provincial agencies. That meant there was nobody looking after the over-all situation with a view to establishing a reasonable national quota. The people who were part of the agency did not have the time nor the expertise to embark upon a program to expand international sales.

It is my view that a national agency composed of provincial people had very little opportunity to get off the ground. One of the committee's recommendations was that the size of CEMA should be increased by three members and hopefully one of these would become chairman. It was felt that people who were properly oriented would look at the over-all position. The committee felt that the government should immediately look into the question of importing and exporting eggs. Surely it would be better not to import them from the United States. If we allow unmarked table eggs to come in from the United States, they can be packed in boxes displaying Canadian companies' names without any indication that they are not Canadian eggs. In Ontario, a large number of eggs come directly from the United States and to my knowledge the government has not taken steps, under the orderly marketing operations which are a right under GATT, to have these eggs labelled as such.

The committee made many suggestions about the bookkeeping of CEMA. The agency depended almost entirely on provincial boards for information on where and what surpluses there were. Sometimes the surpluses were counted twice, and sometimes storage places were missed. The auditors said that an audit could not be done on CEMA books nor on most of the provincial board's books, and recommended—and the committee agreed—that they should meet with the boards and establish a bookkeeping system. They wanted the provincial boards to follow the same set-up so that their audit would be acceptable to federal auditors. I should like to know, from someone on the government side, whether this has been done. If it has not, I should like to know why.

It was also suggested that CEMA be helped to develop a method of disposing of surplus eggs to the needy in Canada. The board indicated that they had investigated this matter, had not found a way to do so advantageously and had therefore temporarily set the idea aside. The committee also recommended that eggs should be in storage for a limited length of time and should only be kept there to meet the needs of Canadians. The committee agreed that some storage eggs could be marked as such and put on the market at a reduced price. It was suggested that eggs were sometimes held in storage longer than they should be because the board was in negotiation with the breaker trade. The report said clearly that if the eggs could not be sold for a reasonable price, CEMA could order them to be broken and converted to powder and then dispose of the egg powder as part of our food aid program to underdeveloped countries. The federal government was to pay for this conversion to powder. This course was better than holding the eggs in storage when there was no likelihood of their being used as fresh table eggs.

● (1620)

The committee was told that eggs could be stored for eight months and still be certified by the Department of Agriculture as fit for human consumption. Obviously, if