

## Supply—Trade and Commerce

not on an equal basis with Australia, New Zealand, and these other countries with warm climates where the stock can run out and graze on grass for twelve months of the year. That also applies to dairy cattle. From what the minister has just said, are we to take it that we should not be raising anything in this country except grain? I am sure he would not suggest that we produce more cheese under present conditions. Eggs, and in fact everything that the farmer grows today in eastern Canada, are under the same handicap when compared with the situation in that regard in other countries. In my opinion, in so far as the cheese situation is concerned, if the United Kingdom market cannot be regained for our surplus, I believe that the government should institute a program that would encourage the people of Canada to eat far more cheese than they are eating today. If we encouraged the people to eat an average of only one pound more of cheese, we would have taken care of approximately 14 million pounds. Another thing I believe the government should do is to discontinue the prohibition against the sale of cheese until it is at least three months old. Many people prefer cheese at a much earlier stage of its development. I feel that if we could conduct some kind of selling program of that nature, we could take care of a great deal of our surplus cheese.

I should like now to mention the position with regard to beef cattle. I hope I am not out of order in mentioning this now; but if I am, the chairman can draw it to my attention. Within the last few years, especially during the time when we had controls in this country, I believe much harm has been done. The government educated the trade of this country—I am now referring more particularly to the retail meat stores—into taking a larger spread. The trade was told during those years, as I am sure every hon. member here will recall, that they could take a certain spread. I know that in several places inspectors who were appointed by the government told storekeepers that they were not charging sufficient for a certain piece of meat. They were told that they were allowed to charge a certain price, and that is what they should charge. I can say this, that I think the government did a good job in educating the retail trade in that respect. I feel and have felt for some time that something should be done. I do not believe in dictatorship or anything of that sort, and I do not mean that, but I think that the government could issue a warning to the retail trade of this country that they have not been fair to either the producers or the consumers of this country.

Hon. members will recall that last January the price of beef dropped a few cents. The unfortunate outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease caused the market to drop a few cents more, and in round figures I think the total drop amounted to about 10 cents a pound live weight for beef cattle. This meant that the wholesale price of beef dropped about 20 cents a pound. I can assure you that you can go into many stores in this country today and find that the consumer is not getting the benefit of that 20-cent reduction. I am sure that if the retail price of beef had dropped as much as the wholesale price the consuming public would be buying beef today at more than 20 cents a pound less than they were paying for it at the beginning of the year. I do feel that the government should issue some statement that would show the trade that the wholesale price has dropped, and therefore there should be an equal drop in the retail price.

I have been speaking particularly about beef, Mr. Chairman, but the same thing applies to pork and everything else. I have been speaking about beef because I think that the price of pork has dropped more fairly. If the price of beef had dropped 22, 23 or 24 cents a pound, then the consumer could have bought much more than he did. The labouring man would have bought far more beef than he has up to the present time, and in that way I think we would have found a market for some of this surplus meat. I will agree that at the end of last year beef prices did reach a high level; in fact they reached a point which was not good for the trade. The price reached a level where the labouring man had to eat less meat, and so today we find ourselves with surplus beef. We find also that the consumer is still paying several cents a pound more for the meat that he is buying than he should be asked to pay. I am only drawing this to the attention of the ministry—I see the Minister of Agriculture smiling, and the problem is one which falls more within his department than that of the Minister of Trade and Commerce.

As I say, I do feel that some statement should be issued by the government. As the Minister of Agriculture said the other night when he was speaking about eggs, if the trade charges too great a spread on eggs, then in October those merchants would find that the government would not take care of their surplus eggs. I believe that if a similar statement were issued concerning beef prices, it would be of some benefit to the consumer. In that way we would also find a greater market for our surplus beef.