

tising to make more profits at the expense of the consumers. Such companies are allowed to reap tremendous profits of about \$300, \$400 or \$500 million and then they are brought before courts. The case is not heard for six, seven or eight months and when it is heard, as provided in the act, a fine of about \$25,000 is imposed. All things considered, it is like levying a fine of two bits against a gangster who has held up a bank for \$200,000.

What a mess! I call that a mess because people right and left draw upon farm products through trade, through some intrigue or other and consumers have to foot the bill. Unfortunately, as the people are not adequately informed, most consumers believe that producers are making huge profits and taking unfair advantage of them while it is quite the opposite.

I was reading a while ago, in a September statement from the Minister of Agriculture, a fairly well documented analysis of the egg marketing problem. I also had a look at a table showing that the egg producers' hourly wage is far from being as high as in other trades especially in the building or the automobile fields or in the industry as a whole. Those figures are such as to make one think and I believe that such information should be more widely published, so that the consumer could be better informed and able to cooperate with the provincial and federal governments whenever improvement measures must be passed and implemented.

Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to enlarge much longer on my comments because as a committee member, I will surely have the opportunity of speaking often enough in committee meetings. I wish to give my colleagues in this committee the assurance that I will bring all the attention that is necessary to make a worthwhile contribution so that we may make an intelligent report that will be, I hope, approved by Parliament. I also hope that we shall pass, once and for all, a legislation to give powers to the department, to the Minister of Agriculture, so that the marketing means given the marketing agencies by the provinces and the National Marketing Council may be worth while and so that it will not merely be a way of creating cushy jobs for friends and paying them fat salaries. On the contrary, public servants should do fruitful work so that the people as a whole would benefit by it.

[English]

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): I want to say just a few words about this motion before it is passed. Basically, I am in favour of the proposed inquiry, but at the same time I should like to raise a few questions which are of importance to those who come from farming areas. I do not want this committee to become a place in which marketing boards are attacked. Marketing boards have a place in our society and I think they should be strengthened as bargaining units for farmers. Farmers fought for about 40 years to establish marketing boards which could bargain for them effectively and see that they received fairer prices for their commodities.

Today there are dozens of marketing boards established in Canada, most of them under provincial jurisdiction. The way I see it, a marketing board should be analogous to the collective bargaining process available to workers. The farmer who is left on his own to fight the weather, the uncertainties of the world economic situation and an

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uncertain market, enjoys little protection. One of the few ways in which he can hope to bargain successfully is through a marketing board.

I shall not tolerate any attempts to erode the strength of marketing boards in the area of farmer protection. I do not wish the boards to become scapegoats because of the imperfections of our society. There are many factors which affect the price of a commodity. The farm unions and wheat pools, with the support of the party to which I belong, have for years campaigned in favour of strong marketing boards. I believe the farmer should enjoy the protection which marketing boards afford, and their activities should extend to all products, including beef, so that the producer is given a chance to bargain for the price of commodities sold in the marketplace. Everybody is bargaining except the farmer.

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I would not want this inquiry to become the focal point for an attack on orderly marketing in this country. I know some groups would like to see CEMA and all marketing boards dismantled. If we ever get to that situation, then I will be standing in this House for as long and as often as I can in order to fight against it. The farmer deserves some presence in the market place, and as far as I am concerned he is going to get it.

If the farmer is to stay in business today, he needs a collective bargaining position. Look at what is happening to the beef producers today. As a result of free marketing and free enterprise, farmers are being driven out of the marketplace. Prices for their products are dropping. If the farmers had a cattle marketing board that would give them collective clout, if they had price supports and price guarantees, I suggest that the average farmer would be able to stay in production and make a viable living for himself and his family. The farmer needs such guarantees. He needs to know in the spring what he will get for his products in the fall. The farmer cannot rely solely on market forces and weather; he needs a marketing board to protect him.

We do, of course, run into problems with the operation of marketing boards, like everything else. CEMA, the first board of its type to be established in this country, has had problems. Eggs have gone to waste. However, let us examine what the alternatives are for handling surplus products. For example, why cannot we use these surplus products as foreign aid, or give them to the poor people of this country? Why is it that we always suspect that the farmer is charging too high a price for his products? It is also important that consumers realize that what he needs is orderly marketing. If the farmer is not assured of stable prices for his commodities, then he will not produce.

We have to take into account the ups and downs of the business cycle and the fact that we do have surpluses. These drive the small farmer out of business. When this is allowed to happen, food becomes scarce and prices are driven up. That sort of thing will continue until we have a system of orderly marketing in this country, until we have marketing boards and the producer is guaranteed a stable income. This would mean, in turn, that the consumer would be guaranteed the same price for bacon in the store one month as the next.