

MANPOWER

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION OF LOCAL INITIATIVES PROGRAMS TO SAWMILLS

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the President of the Treasury Board.

In view of the problems facing the sawmill industry, which are resulting in the layoff of many workers in my area and elsewhere, could the minister tell the House if he has had representations from his colleague the Minister of Manpower and Immigration to the effect that he might have a more considerable budget so as to allow him to give more grants to a greater number of projects with LIP programs and, if so, will he be receiving a favourable answer?

Hon. Jean Chrétien (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, this year's budgets have been established and since the month of August we have been asking all departments to try and live within their budget. No such request has come from the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[English]

AGRICULTURE

EGGS—COMMITTEE STUDY OF OPERATIONS OF CANADIAN EGG MARKETING AGENCY AND AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE THERETO

Mr. Speaker: The President of the Privy Council (Mr. Sharp), seconded by the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand), moves:

That a special committee of 14 members be appointed to inquire into and report upon, with its recommendations, if any,

- (a) the operations of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, and
- (b) the performance of the several authorities having responsibilities with respect to those operations.

That the members of the said committee be Mrs. Appolloni and Messrs. Anderson, Cafik, Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi), Fox, Goodale, Gray, Lambert (Bellechasse), Lawrence, Lessard, Mazankowski, McGrath, Murta and Orlikow;

That the said committee have power to send for persons, papers and records and examine witnesses; to sit when the House is sitting; to sit during periods when the House stands adjourned; to report from time to time and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be deemed advisable; to delegate to sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report direct to the House; and to engage the services of such expert staff as may be deemed necessary;

And that the said committee be instructed to make its report to this House no later than December 16, 1974.

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I had hoped the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) would follow the usual custom and practice of the House by rising in his place to formally propose this motion and speak in support of it. Perhaps the minister will honour us with his remarks later in the debate. In any event, it is rather unusual for a minister not to stand in his place and formally propose a motion to set up a special committee of

Canadian Egg Marketing Agency

the House to examine into and report upon the operations of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency.

On August 28 last, following the release of the second report on egg prices by the Food Prices Review Board, I issued a press release on behalf of the official opposition calling for a parliamentary inquiry into the whole matter of egg marketing in Canada and the rather startling disclosure which had been made at that time, namely, that some nine million eggs had to be destroyed because they had been allowed to rot in storage. I remember saying at that time that I thought it rather strange that these startling revelations should come so soon after the federal general election. I said then, and I repeat now, that this affair has all the elements of a deliberate cover-up.

When the Minister of Agriculture was carrying out his crusade and visiting rural constituencies in this country campaigning on behalf of the Liberal Party, millions of eggs were rotting in storage. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that was at a time when Canadians were paying record high prices. I submit the evidence clearly indicates the minister was aware of that situation. I said this situation has all the elements of a cover-up. It was a cover-up carried out to protect the Minister of Agriculture and to ensure Liberal votes in rural Canada. That is the only conclusion one can draw. However, if you are going to try to cover up rotten eggs, it is only fair to suggest that it is pretty hard to conceal the stench.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: The revelations of last August shocked Canadians. At that time, Canadians were even beginning to accept high prices for eggs as a fact of life. Nevertheless, they were, and are shocked over that and subsequent revelations.

This committee inquiry which was originally called for by the official opposition will, in my opinion, not only establish maladministration by the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency and the Farm Products Marketing Council, but maladministration by the Minister of Agriculture. That is a serious charge, Mr. Speaker. In putting forward such a charge, one should ask: what are the responsibilities of the minister and, indeed, of the government in relation to this matter? The provisions of the statute, the Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act, are quite clear. They define the responsibilities. The statute should be clear in defining these responsibilities because this agency has been given the power of monopoly and is allowed to operate outside the provisions of the Combines Investigation Act.

The act provides—I am paraphrasing—that it is the duty of the Farm Products Marketing Council to review the operations of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency with a view to ensuring that CEMA carries on its operations in accordance with its objectives. It must promote a strong, efficient and competitive production and marketing in the egg industry and, further, have due regard to the interests of egg producers and egg consumers. The fact that it must have due regard for producers and consumers seems to have escaped the Minister of Agriculture. I refer the minister to section 6(1) of the act. In order to fulfil this duty, the council must, among other things, review the operations of CEMA and report thereon annually to the Minis-