

*Egg Marketing Committee Report*

good recommendations were made by him, but I do not know whether they were given any consideration either by the farm marketing board or by CEMA itself. Only the minister can give us that information because, due to special circumstances, this matter is not before the Standing Committee on Agriculture as it normally would be.

I was pleased to hear the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) say that later a member of the House will be moving an amendment recommending that this matter go before the committee on agriculture. I would certainly support such a motion. First, however, I would like to indicate two things. The previous speaker put great emphasis on the fact that consumers are not involved in marketing legislation. He has mentioned this on several previous occasions, presumably on behalf of consumers. I believe that that is one of the matters that was dealt with very effectively by the committee, and I think the hon. member stood alone in his contention.

Without doubt, marketing legislation does affect the consumer but it does not necessarily affect him in the way that the hon. member pointed out. Obviously it affects the consumer because a monopoly is being established, normally for the benefit of the people who are operating it—in this case, the egg producers—and who are deciding how many eggs should be produced, where they should be produced, and at what cost. The consumer is affected if the cost is too high. Conversely, it is true that the consumer will gain considerable benefit from orderly marketing if supplies are made available during a continuous period of time so that there are no shortfalls, at which time the price is exorbitantly high, and no surpluses when the consumer still buys a normal amount of the product and the remainder of the product depresses the market and the surrounding sectors affected by that market. If the price of eggs drops very low, other farming segments are affected, such as cattle, poultry, and so on, because this is a protein that can be used for various purposes.

● (1600)

Mr. Speaker, whether the producer will learn nationally to control his produce to his advantage in order to ensure a reasonable price, and at the same time supply the market with a suitable product over a continuous period, will depend on whether the agency we now have will bring together the constitutional problem of provincial versus federal control. If it is able to master this, in my opinion it will be able to serve the needs of the consumer and probably facilitate the consumer having some input in respect of legislation in this area.

For many months when the Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act was before the committee on agriculture, I fought against it, not because I was opposed to the idea of orderly marketing but because I was opposed to the idea of the federal government establishing a piece of marketing legislation which it would not be able to control. It seems to me that what happened in respect of the egg marketing legislation was inevitable because we operated the Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act for the first time in the development of a national agency that was dependent entirely upon provincial agencies. There was considerable discussion at that time by many provinces as to whether they were willing to give up their autonomy in establishing quotas and prices. There was a great deal of discussion

[Mr. Peters.]

on whether they were willing to give this up to the federal government or whether they would operate in conjunction with the other provinces under the umbrella of national marketing legislation. They opted, under the egg marketing legislation, to do just that. It is my opinion that this kind of marketing legislation will never operate satisfactorily. It will not operate satisfactorily because provinces will continually, in every agricultural field, be looking for self-sufficiency. If every province looks for self-sufficiency in every field, obviously there will be a surplus which no federal government will be able to handle.

On a number of occasions we have overcome this problem of federal-provincial jurisdiction in respect of agricultural production. We have done this in the industrial milk field. The federal government operates a monopoly in industrial milk products simply because we were willing to make a very substantial payment to get control of that field. The provincial governments have not become involved in it; they have allowed the federal government to operate it. I have heard very little complaint with the exception of price, which will always be a complaint with farmers, with workers and with everyone else when it comes to the sale of their commodities. But I have heard no complaint from the provinces as to the operation of the federal government in the industrial milk field.

To a lesser degree, because it affects a smaller number of people—but certainly in a much larger field—the federal government has successfully operated the Canadian Wheat Board which has a monopoly in three provinces and a monopoly, in a different way, in two other provinces. It has operated this monopoly on behalf of the producer over a long time and in my opinion has done so successfully. Any detriment which has occurred to the industry over the years, or to consumers, has been in my opinion due to meddling with that marketing agency and production: we have reduced its efficiency. I am convinced that federal marketing legislation is necessary. I am convinced that it is advantageous. Whether we can get the co-operation of all the people who joined CEMA is very doubtful.

The hon. member for St. John's East also complained about the fact that again there is building up a very large surplus of eggs, and if that surplus continues—it was indicated early in January that we had 40 million and we were increasing that surplus by 15 million per week—I think he has reason to worry. It is very interesting to note that his sidekick or mentor, Mrs. Plumtre, does not take his position. She said on January 16, referring to this vast build-up, as reported in the *Toronto Globe and Mail*:

Beryl Plumtre, chairman of the Food Prices Review Board, said in Ottawa yesterday there is no need for panic over the 40 million egg surplus.

"That's not an excessive amount," Mrs. Plumtre said. "It's certainly not anything to be panicking about."

She said the president of CEMA has a tough job ahead of him, "so for goodness sake let's give him a chance to get the situation under control."

Mrs. Plumtre did not seem to be particularly worried about it. But two things which were involved at the same time really worry me. When asked about this matter, one of the officials of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency said they had had a large build-up of eggs—they had 40 million plus the weekly increase of 15 million—but that was last week and now it has all been taken care of. I am