

*Egg Marketing Committee Report*

Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs should tell the House what he proposes to do about, for example, the recommendations contained in the Forbes Report on Consumer Interest in Marketing Boards. The Forbes report was not undertaken as an academic exercise. This is a report that was commissioned by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs which has been in the hands of the minister and his department since last April. From what I have read of the minister's appearance before the committee, he has obviously ignored Professor Forbes' recommendations, just as he has ignored the recommendations of the Consumers Association of Canada. I regret this very much because for a while the minister was showing some promise. I certainly hope we will hear from him in this debate.

Professor Forbes' report, which I commend to all hon. members of the House, contains some interesting reading. He has described our agricultural policy as "confused" and as a "hodgepodge" which is costing the Canadian taxpayer, to paraphrase him, over \$1 billion a year. We certainly have a good example of this confusion before the House at the moment. We are told that the broiler chicken industry in Canada is in a mess. I mention that fact because the government has once again made no response whatever to the recommendations of the Food Prices Review Board report which was released on January 13. In that report the board recommended that the federal government "not proceed with the establishment of a national chicken marketing agency until a number of questions arising from the board's findings are resolved".

As an extra plank in its program to end the chicken and egg war, the government put into place plans to set up a national broiler chicken marketing agency. In its report on January 13, which is in the hands of all hon. members, the board sets out very good reasons for taking this view, reasons that I think are very germane to this debate. For example, the board found that producer price increases in the chicken broiler industry and the wholesale price spreads do not appear to justify either the increase in average retail prices in the past year or the differences in retail price spreads among the provinces. The board goes on to question whether these differences in fact reflect regional differences in input costs. On checking today, I was told that there are 34 million pounds of broiler chicken in cold storage.

At the time the report was filed, there were 31 million pounds of broiler chicken in cold storage as of last September. The board finds that the Canadian Broiler Council's proposal for a national chicken marketing plan under the National Farm Products Marketing Agencies Act—

● (1550)

—features a narrow definition of the interests to be served in a national marketing plan and it does not resolve the problem of provincial versus federal jurisdiction which seriously impeded the effective working of the national egg marketing plan.

Therein the board underlined the most serious weakness of the national egg marketing plan, and that is the problem of jurisdiction, the problem of the constitution and the fact that CEMA consists of ten provincial marketing agencies which have full jurisdiction under the constitution. Unless these provincial marketing agencies are prepared to discipline themselves and to adhere rigidly to the

agreed upon quotas, there can be no national marketing plan. That is precisely what has happened and that is why today there is no national marketing plan.

It should be remembered—I think this is worth pointing out for the record—that it was the Food Prices Review Board that touched off the egg controversy in the first instance. It made a similar report on eggs back in January of last year. At that time the Minister of Agriculture saw fit to ignore the recommendations in that report. He still has not responded to the board's report on the chicken broiler industry even though it was released early in January and contains serious charges that should be made the subject of an investigation by the minister or somebody designated by him. One would think the minister would have learned a lesson, but it is obvious that some people never learn. Perhaps the minister, if he graces us with his presence today, will tell us what he proposes to do about the findings of the board on the broiler chicken industry. Otherwise, he should tell Mrs. Plumptre and her people to go home and stop wasting the taxpayer's money if these reports are to be ignored, as they are from time to time.

In summation, I should like to say the following. We feel that the report should be referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture so that we can get all the facts. On the basis of the evidence we have, the Minister of Agriculture was warned as far back as December, 1973—and that evidence was presented very clearly to the committee in a memorandum which was presented by the Farm Products Marketing Council—that egg surpluses were getting out of control and would continue to get out of control. The minister's failure to act on the report of the council at that time, his subsequent behaviour with regard to the report of the Food Prices Review Board and the publicity which attended the first revelation, can only be construed as an attempt to cover up this whole rotten affair—an attempt which, I am pleased to say, failed.

Let the minister now level with the House and with the country, because it is not CEMA that is on trial here but the whole concept of national commodity marketing agencies and the supply-management principle. Neither concept has been served well by this minister. At a time when Canadians are paying record high prices for food, and when there are rising farm input costs, we have a right to know if the minister intends to take steps to ensure that before any other national marketing plans are put in place the best interests of both producers and consumers will be protected.

Furthermore, the minister has an obligation to tell us that these things will be done not just as another ad hoc program, as an ad hoc reaction to a continuing crisis situation, but in the context of a national food policy which was recommended to the government by the Special Committee on Trends in Food Prices of late lamented memory, and that such a national food policy will not only honour our obligations and commitments to the people of Canada but our obligations and commitments to the people of the starving world.

**Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to have heard the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) this afternoon because many things were done by the Department of Agriculture and in my opinion many