

because it could not sell its eggs. And as CEMA debts climbed, the agency's operations were placed under the direct operating control of the federal government's Farm Products Marketing Council. CEMA's original goal had been to coordinate the work of the provinces and set up a national pool, but its problem was that controls in each province had to be enforced by the provincial boards. That is an important point.

What happened was this: CEMA was not getting the kind of co-operation from the provinces that was needed, the result being that producers took advantage of the system. Agency leaders said that harsher legislation was needed to control producers, if the system was to work. In other words, we need to be tougher with producers or they will not make the system work. This concept involves supply and management. Some suggested a control system from the hatchery to the processing plant and everywhere in between. That seemed the only way to make the system work. Yet board leaders and provincial governments would not always give agencies the power to enforce the kind of controls which were needed for their industry.

Agency leaders admitted that the breakdown of the program resulted from failure to control all eggs. One CEMA manager charged that too many producers pay only lip service to the plan and evade its rules. Another CEMA official said that producers had created CEMA to manage their affairs but would not give it the authority to control producers. A provincial marketing board official said they were doing their damndest to control the surplus of quota eggs that were moving around the province.

Although the seriousness of the egg problem became apparent only this summer, the tell-tale signs were evident long before, in the early part of last winter. The marketing board official I have referred to said that the board has as many inspectors on the road policing producers as is practical, and that is doing all it can to enforce quotas and penalize producers who overproduce.

I think it could be stated with virtual certainty that the whole concept of marketing boards in Canada is in doubt. The people of this country, rightly or wrongly, are asking questions about marketing boards. Many farmers are uncertain of the value of these boards. They do not know where they are going or whether they work in their best interests. Such questions are being asked in the rural communities of Canada. Officials involved with marketing legislation are also uncertain about what should be proposed. Hopefully, the deliberations of the committee will clarify some questions affecting marketing boards which play a large part in the production of certain commodities in Canada.

The hon. member who spoke before me said that members of my party never make constructive criticism; we do not say what ought to be done about marketing boards. Well, the inquiry will provide some answers. We hope to make marketing boards better, not to tear them apart. If they are worth saving, they are worth making better. May I make the following observations about marketing boards. Many boards and agencies, either through lack of purpose or failure to recognize opportunities, have not paid attention to the future of their industries. In effect, they have forgotten to invest in the future because of the pressures of today.

Canadian Egg Marketing Agency

We need to reappraise the direction in which marketing boards are going and to examine closely the basic reasons for the existence of such boards or agencies. It might be advisable if the marketing boards now operating re-examined their organizations and rethought their programs. Boards and agencies in the development stage might take stock of a few basic guidelines and considerations before formalizing their organizations. Where marketing boards exist, their specific objectives should be tailored to the specific commodity or area of their operation.

If marketing boards are to achieve the objectives they have set themselves, they may need to adopt a more positive and aggressive philosophy. This applies to all marketing boards that I can think of. With one or two exceptions, we could put all federal and provincial marketing boards into the same basket. In essence, a board should be capable of taking advantage of each marketing opportunity as it presents itself. Boards should be aggressively market-oriented and aggressive merchandisers of their products, not just sellers or controllers. They should also consider identifying and segregating the various market segments with which they deal. For instance, there could be segments for fresh produce, processed materials and commodities for export.

In closing, may I say that if the inquiry is to mean anything, we must meet the challenge of developing and operating marketing organizations such as CEMA which, by being aggressively market-oriented, hold out the possibility of future growth and development for their particular industries.

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However, when all is said and done, the future of marketing boards in this country depends almost entirely upon how well the commodity groups choose to use marketing boards, how well these groups adhere to the powers that marketing boards give them, how open these groups are with producers and consumers and, finally, how well each develops and upholds its own objectives and marketing plans within its area. If we can keep some of these guidelines in mind when talking about the whole subject of marketing boards, it will be a meaningful exercise that we will be going through in the next few months.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) has a lot to account for, but whether he will start giving us any information today is another thing. When you come down to who is ultimately responsible for the present mess in egg marketing in Canada, the fault must be laid at the door of the Minister of Agriculture.

An hon. Member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Murta: The hon. member laughs. I cannot think of anyone else. It must be the Minister of Agriculture. In the next few weeks we will expect the Minister of Agriculture to tell us in as much detail as possible what has happened in the past eight to ten months in this situation. Hopefully, we can take a broad look at marketing boards and supply management, not necessarily with the idea of throwing them out but with the idea of making them more effective not only for the consumers of this country but for the people they represent and work for, namely, the producers.