

Supply—Agriculture

a price that is about as high as can be offered, with 32 or 34 cents for grade A eggs and take the average, one can go round saying that eggs are selling at a certain price.

I repeat that in order to overcome that difficulty and get the matter handled as it should be handled, we require an awful lot of co-operation from the hatchers who can determine now what the old hen could not determine. She just sat in the spring and produced the eggs, but today the hatcheries can produce the eggs at any time. When we say we will take eggs on December 31, then we will have so many eggs on December 31. If we have difficulty in handling them we will have to do something else.

We have to have co-operation from the hatcheries, the provincial governments and from the merchants who handle the eggs with regard to grading and all that kind of thing, and some of that requires legislation. That brings me to the point raised by the hon. member for Assiniboia, with regard to the legislation that might be necessary to make it possible for boards to operate successfully. I don't think we have yet had in any western province an egg board set up that could operate successfully, and there may be more reasons than one for that, too.

If we are going to have boards of any kind set up we are told by those who are members of co-operative organizations handling the farmers' products that we must have some amendments not only in provincial but also in federal legislation, and that matter has been brought to our attention through the decision of the court. As a matter of fact we took the matter to the court and the court made the decision. It has been brought to our attention by the government of the one province apart from British Columbia that has been very active in forming these marketing boards. They have suggested to us, I think about ten days or two weeks ago, in a communication to the Minister of Justice that they were prepared to make certain amendments, and they have suggested that we should make certain amendments.

Discussions have been passing back and forth on this matter, and the deputy minister of justice is in Toronto today discussing that and other matters with the government of Ontario. As soon as these discussions have been completed we shall be in a position to say whether or not legislation can be brought in this session to meet the situation which exists.

Mr. McCullough (Moose Mountain): Mr. Chairman, I was very happy to hear the minister's remarks, because I think he is

aware that some of us have been very concerned about the price the producer has received over the years for his eggs.

The minister comes to this house year after year and says there is a federal agricultural support act through which egg prices are supported in this country, and I believe the impression is that the producer has been benefited to the extent that he gets a fair and just price for his product. I think the minister now is admitting at least that some of us who have been urging over the past four or five years that some steps should be taken to change the legislation so the prices paid to producers would be more in line with retail prices of eggs throughout the country were not entirely wrong.

I have here some of the figures taken from the poultry market report which showed as of November of last year the prices ruling at such centres as Vancouver, Winnipeg, Montreal, Toronto and Calgary. The average price for grade A large eggs on August 28 was 53 cents a dozen. By November it was 36 cents a dozen, a difference of 17 cents. I think the minister has admitted that there has been a tremendous spread between grades of eggs, that is to say between grade A large and grade A medium. But there is also a very great discrepancy in the prices of grade A large eggs over a very short period of time during the year.

I would like to point out to the committee that the price spread to the producer has varied a great deal throughout the various points in the country, and I think this will certainly show that the minister was not justified in stating in this chamber in reply to a question of mine some time ago that all difficulty about egg prices is in the province of Saskatchewan. The fact is that right across the country producers of eggs have been suffering a great deal from the fluctuations in price.

I have here figures showing that there was a difference of 4 cents between grade A large and grade A medium eggs last fall. In Toronto one day there was a difference between A large and A medium of 17 cents; at Calgary there was a difference between A medium and B eggs of 20 cents a dozen; and at Montreal at the same time a difference between A medium and B of 2 cents a dozen.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think it is quite apparent that at the present time, certainly, egg prices have varied a great deal from point to point, without much stabilization being apparent; and I am very happy to note that the minister has given hon. members of this chamber at least some assurance that on the urging of different farm organizations and hon. members of this house the