

Egg Marketing Committee Report

years of delay, waste and procrastination by this particular minister.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Nonsense!

● (2120)

Mr. Lawrence: There is no question in my mind—

Mr. Cafik: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I should like to know whether the hon. member who has the floor would permit a question.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Morin): Would the hon. member allow a question?

Mr. Lawrence: I would be delighted to answer a sensible question if the hon. member is capable of asking me one.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lawrence: However, under the circumstances and due to the record of that particular member, I would rather have him wait until I have completed my comments.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lawrence: If some of the hon. members had had the gumption about a year ago to stand up and call chicken, we would not be in the mess in which we find ourselves. In any event, there is no question in my mind that a good portion of the blame not only belongs to the Minister of Agriculture but belongs to some of the provincial governments and provincial boards that exist right now across this country. We are not trying to lay the blame completely and exclusively at the feet of the Minister of Agriculture. Heaven only knows that he is responsible, even though is not willing to admit it. But I do say that another element in this—and you should merely look at the history of this tangled web of the egg industry to realize it—is that the provincial governments and marketing boards in the first instance had to come on bended knee to plead with the then minister of agriculture to get a national egg marketing scheme adopted.

I say in defence of this government—although not in defence of this Minister of Agriculture because he was not minister then—that certainly at that time it was in the interests of the provincial egg marketing boards and of the provincial governments to have a national egg marketing scheme. I do not think that there is any question in anybody's mind that they were willing to try to get the federal government to take on the scheme, but unwilling to give to the federal government the power, the control and the policing mechanism necessary to make it work. But I do say to you that the careless if not negligent minister of agriculture of the day, followed by his bungling successor in this office, failed miserably at that time to talk turkey to the provincial boards and provincial governments.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

[Mr. Lawrence.]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): You got them going. They are awake now.

Mr. Lawrence: They should have said to them simply this, "All right, if you want us to bail you out, then, by golly, transfer to us the necessary power". There is no question that that was not done and that it should have been done. The reason it was not done is the fault of the federal government. We got into a hassle, and now a couple of years too late everybody is seeing the light, including the provincial boards and the provincial governments. They themselves apparently are now well along the road to some form of recovery. That is great, but let us not forget that it was this government that bungled the deal in the first place, and it should bear that responsibility.

I can well understand the feeling of some of the provincial boards and provincial governments in respect of CEMA and, more particularly, the National Farm Products Marketing Council. More than one individual at the provincial level has come to me, not just Tories, not just members of a provincial board or a provincial government that is Conservative, but others who have asked me why in heavens name they should give any power or control to the federal National Farm Marketing Council when they have no confidence in it. I asked them how come they have no confidence in the council, and they said, "Look at the makeup of the council. It is made up of political appointees, people who are appointed to that council more for their knowledge of the ins and outs of the political halls of this country than for what they know about agricultural production".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lawrence: Now the minister comes to the House tonight and says, as he did in the committee: "Oh gosh, fellows, I couldn't do anything about it. All I could do was to either keep them going or cut them off". That is absolutely ridiculous. First of all the council has the general supervisory power of any national marketing agency. Who appoints the council? The federal government appoints its members on the recommendation of the minister. Secondly, the council which supervises the national agency is responsible to the minister. Who provides the credit for the national agency? It is provided under a letter of comfort signed by the present Minister of Agriculture. If he has no control over that council, if he has no control over CEMA, then what in the world is he doing signing a letter of comfort which provided the basic credit for the agency itself? Certainly he has control. If he has no control, why is he now going to take the credit for cleaning up the mess? Of course he has control.

The council is responsible to the minister, the council advises the minister, the council reports to the minister, and the council has the general regulatory supervision over the national farm marketing agencies. The minister did not even take the trouble or time to find out if the proper statistics were being formulated by CEMA. Surely to goodness somewhere along the line some of the taint of this mess must rub off on the minister. The whole reason for a national egg marketing agency must be found in the problem that the egg producers and the provincial boards have been having in respect of interprovincial and international trade. If that power exists, as it can only exist in