

*Egg Marketing Committee Report*

them aware of their shortcomings. Surely they are smart enough at this point not to go through the whole exercise again.

Mention should be made of the special position of the Minister of Agriculture and his relationship to these events. The power given to the Minister of Agriculture is clearly stated in the course of the background respecting ministerial responsibility. On page 6 of issue No. 16 of the proceedings of the Special Committee on Egg Marketing, the following appears:

The committee fully recognizes the principle of ministerial responsibility which is fundamental to the British parliamentary system and therefore effectively directs all of its observations and recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture for his consideration even though they have direct bearing on the operations of the National Farm Products Marketing Council, CEMA, provincial boards, provincial governments and other departments of the Government of Canada . . .

The committee further recognizes that the Minister of Agriculture does not have any direct control over the operation of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency. The agency has the obligation imposed upon it by parliament to report directly through the Farm Products Marketing Council. The Farm Products Marketing Council in turn has a responsibility and obligation to report to parliament through the Minister of Agriculture. The Farm Products Marketing Council Act passed by parliament does not envisage that the Minister of Agriculture directly would have responsibility for the day to day operations of the Farm Products Marketing Council. These responsibilities rest primarily on the shoulders of the management of the Farm Products Marketing Council itself.

On page 16:7 of the same report evidence is given to the committee by the legal advisers to the National Farm Products Marketing Council that unilateral action on the part of the minister or the agency was not possible. In other words, we are dealing with a conglomerate of ten provinces associated for the common purpose of establishing a stable price. Neither the provinces, the minister nor the agency can take action on their own. Possibly this is a weakness in the system. However, I suppose that in some respects it is rather like confederation itself, where the ten provinces sometimes work together and sometimes do not. It is unfortunate that provincial boards do not at all times submit to the will of the national board, but I suppose it is only understandable that they should wish to protect the interests of their own areas.

In any case, it would be foolish to suggest that the minister had it within his power to correct the situation which was developing, without reference to the other provinces and to the other boards. It would be a great disservice to the minister, who is recognized as one of the all-time champions of the farmers, to accuse him of failing to follow the progress of this agency as though he could throw out the life-saver which would rescue an extremely waterlogged board.

● (1650)

When hon. members have perused all the evidence given before the committee, I hope they will feel, as I did, that there was a genuine and sincere attempt by many people, who before the committee met had had very little experience of eggs, egg marketing boards and farmers, to outline the faults that had been created and to bring in remedies and cures for those faults. However, to return this matter to the agricultural committee would, I think, be a waste of time both for the committee and for the House.

[Mr. Anderson.]

[Translation]

**Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse):** Madam Speaker, the Special Committee on Egg Marketing, of which I am a member, received very special terms of reference, that is to inquire into the performance of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, established under the provisions of Bill C-176.

The terms of reference of that body entailed very great responsibilities. That was evidenced by the seriousness all members displayed during all the proceedings which lasted several weeks. I wish to pay homage to all my colleagues on the committee for the responsible way in which they worked during the proceedings. They very objectively endeavoured to find out the weaknesses of this egg marketing program, put forth recommendations for its improvement and enable on the one hand, producers to get the income they deserve and, on the other hand, consumers to buy good quality eggs at prices they can afford. In my view, Madam Speaker, such was the objective to be set by the committee in order to serve the whole Canadian people.

A number of sessions were held, many witnesses appeared, as was aptly mentioned by the hon. member that moved the motion to debate the committee's report dated December 16, 1974. It is my conclusion that members of the Canadian Egg Marketing Board either showed levity, or failed to realize the extent of their responsibilities.

Under an act of Parliament, the Farm Product Marketing Council's responsibility was to establish, at the request of producers themselves, a marketing board, the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency. During the months after that agency was established, we saw problems were arising. Producers were not altogether satisfied with the scheme, and also egg marketing was not being conducted in an orderly fashion in Canada.

Newspaper reports appeared to the effect that eggs were let to spoil in various locations; FEDCO, the agency in the province of Quebec, was not adequately fulfilling its member's expectations, and in other areas such as British Columbia or even Ontario the orderly marketing of eggs fell somewhat short of expectations.

The Food Prices Review Board, the so-called Plumptre Commission, entered into the picture, presumably at the request of consumers complaining they could not get fresh enough eggs, or at reasonable prices they could afford, or the eggs offered for sales were unmarked and they were in doubt whether they were buying Canadian eggs or eggs imported from some other country.

The Plumptre Board made a few reports, made checks on the spot, determined that there were irregularities in this area, that there was something wrong, and it submitted its report. Every member of the special committee responsible for studying this problem was able to see certain recommendations that the reports of this board contain.

Madam Speaker, even after all this, the issue was raised in Parliament, and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) was faced with an extremely serious problem, namely that there was something wrong. A motion was then presented in Parliament asking that a special committee be instructed to examine all aspects of this problem