

Inquiries of the Ministry

that we are prepared to proceed right from that point in the matter as though there had been no change.

TRANSPORT

INQUIRY AS TO APPOINTMENT OF CONTROLLER

On the orders of the day:

Mr. F. D. Shaw (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Minister of Transport. Is it the intention to appoint a transport controller?

Hon. George C. Marler (Minister of Transport): I have already made some comments on this subject in the house. I do not think I can usefully add anything to what has already been said.

EGGS

STATEMENT ON OPERATION OF FLOOR PRICE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. E. G. McCullough (Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, on February 6 I directed a question to the Acting Minister of Agriculture. If the minister has taken notice of the question I wonder whether he is prepared to give an answer to the house? My question was this:

Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a question to the Acting Minister of Agriculture. Can the minister say whether the government has sufficient concern about the serious condition facing the poultry industry in Canada with respect to eggs to take government action to assist the industry?

Right Hon. J. G. Gardiner (Minister of Agriculture): Yes. Well, Mr. Speaker, a number of questions have been asked on this matter and one was asked on Wednesday last which had to do with the detail of the same matter, and I shall answer the larger question later.

On Wednesday last the hon. member for Victoria, Ont. (Mr. Hodgson) asked a question regarding the price of eggs being delivered to grading stations in his constituency. I have made inquiry and am advised that apparent prices available to producers in that area have been on the basis of 30 cents or more per dozen for grade A large eggs, which is regarded as being in line with the support price.

With regard to the larger question which has been referred to by the hon. member for Moose Mountain, the arrangements which have been made in connection with eggs date back to about six years ago, and we have been carrying on the same policy from that time down to the present, which is to the effect that we are prepared to accept eggs in storage at storage points across Canada on the basis of 38 cents a dozen at the storage

plants. Difficulties have developed on two or three occasions during the last six years which have made it necessary for us to change the regulations from time to time in order to make it possible for us to enforce the intention of the policy which we are following.

We had some difficulties two years ago which resulted in our having eggs off the market at a time when eggs were going up very high in price. They went up to 85 cents a dozen and we were holding 107,000 cases of eggs. Therefore, during the next year we changed the regulations to make it possible to put the eggs back on the market at any time, with the result that we continued on through last year without any difficulty.

This year, for reasons over which we have very little control, there did develop a very high supply of eggs around the middle of November and it increased into the month of January. The regulations, as they stood, were found again not to be such as to make it possible fully to enforce the intentions of the policy, and so we have again changed the regulations to make it possible for us to take the eggs, oil-dipped, as of a date in January and we continue to do so. That has had the result in most places of putting the eggs up to 30 cents grade A large to the producer. There are odd places where they are down to 29 cents and there are some where they have been down perhaps even lower than that. The difficulty in places where they have been priced lower, such as, say, in western Ontario, in certain parts of Saskatchewan and elsewhere, is that we have no control whatsoever over the dealings within a province. Since control over intraprovincial trade is with the provincial authorities and always has been, if someone does sell eggs at 28 cents a dozen, grade A large, intraprovincially we have no means of prosecuting anyone for doing that, nor have we any authority to say that they must be sold at some other price. There will be places across the country where eggs are sold at prices lower than the 38-cent price delivered at storage plants. That is sometimes due to the fact that the storage plant is a long distance removed. All I can say is that in so far as it is possible to enforce the idea we are prepared to buy eggs at 38 cents grade A large at storage, and that is all we can do under the circumstances. We say we are prepared to buy eggs at a certain place under certain conditions at a certain price; if the eggs are delivered there we buy them, but if somebody undertakes to sell eggs to some person at a lower price than that within the province we have no way of enforcing the price. We cannot compel him to deliver them to us at some other point.

[Mr. Gardiner.]