

*Oral Questions***CONSUMER AFFAIRS****REPORT OF FOOD PRICES REVIEW BOARD ON EGG
MARKETING—GOVERNMENT ACTION**

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary to my previous question and it is addressed to the Minister of Agriculture. What action has the government taken with regard to the recommendations of the Food Prices Review Board concerning egg marketing, which were released in January of this year? The first recommendation suggested that the price of eggs in Canada be lowered without delay to reduce the present excess margin over cost while maintaining a fair return to producers. The board also recommended that exclusive marketing be taken away from the CEMA and the egg marketing board. What action has the government taken on these recommendations? My question is all the more urgent because—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Perhaps the minister might be allowed to reply.

Mr. McGrath: Mr. Speaker, it has been six weeks since the House last sat and the government has taken no action on the recommendations of this board which is costing the taxpayers \$2 million a year.

Hon. E. F. Whelan (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the government has taken action according to the powers or obligations vested in the Minister of Agriculture and the Farm Products Marketing Council which reports to me. Under that legislation I asked them to make a thorough study of this Food Prices Review Board report. Parliament vested the power to do that in the Farm Products Marketing Council and that is what they are doing. The report will be made public as soon as it has been completed. They are working on it at the present time and it should be finished shortly.

**PROPOSED INCREASE IN PRICE OF BREAD—REQUEST FOR
INQUIRY INTO ACTIVITIES OF FLOUR MILLING COMPANIES**

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs with regard to the prospect of an increase in the price of bread. Will the minister cause an inquiry to be made into the activities of the flour milling companies which own a great number of bakeries and are able to pad the price of flour and make it appear as though the cost to the baker is more than it actually is? Will the minister investigate that type of situation?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to see that the hon. member's comments are drawn to the attention of the director of the combines branch so that, if there is a basis for action to be taken under the Combines Investigation Act, which is the authority for such activity given to me by parliament, that action can be taken.

[Mr. Speaker.]

● (1140)

FOOD PRICES REVIEW BOARD**INCREASES IN 1974-75 BUDGET—POSSIBILITY OF NEW POWERS**

Mr. Allan Lawrence (Northumberland-Durham): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It arises from the disclosure in the 1974-75 estimates that the budget of the Food Prices Review Board will amount to \$1.9 million for the next fiscal year, an increase of 90 per cent. Does this added expenditure indicate any new powers for the board?

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): The board will continue to carry out the mandate given it under the Inquiries Act in line with the recommendations of the Committee of the House on Trends in Food Prices.

Mr. Lawrence: I asked the minister whether the increased expenditure would mean any new powers for the board. I was not talking about the existing set-up.

Mr. Gray: My answer was clear, I think. I will try to shorten it if the hon. member had difficulty with it. The answer is no.

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GRAIN**SHORTAGE OF BOXCARS TO MOVE GRAIN—GOVERNMENT
ACTION**

Mr. Norval Horner (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. In light of the failure of the railways to move grain to Vancouver where presently 12 vessels are waiting and ten more are expected next week, and since the railways have fallen 14,000 cars behind the targets set by them on January 6, would the minister inform the House and the country what action the government is prepared to take if this crisis continues?

Hon. Otto E. Lang (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, we have been holding intensive discussions at the official level and with management concerning the problems that have arisen. The hon. member is quite right when he says that the railways have fallen behind the targets they themselves established as being reasonable for this period. This raises serious questions about an adequate explanation for such conduct even given the limitation upon the number of cars available in the country as a whole. One can appreciate that very difficult winter conditions have impeded the operation of the railways because of the tremendous amount of power required for snowplowing in the prairie region and also because of time out spent by power units affected by snow conditions. The question is whether the railways are doing all they can to overcome these difficulties and how quickly they will mobilize every possible part of their resources in order to overcome the over-all problem and get us back on target.