

Supply—Agriculture

that the agricultural prices stabilization board could make certain that no combine could exist if it would buy in smaller lots from independent dealers and not buy apparently only from the members of this association who are the large purchasers and therefore able to assemble eggs in large quantities.

Mr. Harkness: We buy mostly from the co-operatives in western Canada.

Mr. Argue: If a co-operative is in an association that is taking action detrimental to the producers in any given area I would no more come to the defence of the co-operative than I would of any other organization. I repeat what I have said, namely that there has been evidence that this was being done. It was brought to the attention of the minister and I am suggesting a method by which this kind of thing could be prevented in the future. If we had some real teeth in the legislation, if we had the type of national marketing boards of which I have spoken, this situation could not obtain.

The producers of eggs are thoroughly dissatisfied with the grades and prices they receive. Other members can speak for the constituencies they represent but when I was home at Easter I found that farmers throughout southern Saskatchewan were getting 18 to 20 cents a dozen for their eggs when they took them to local stores and purchasers.

Mr. Harkness: What grade?

Mr. Argue: Average grade. Do you remember seeing an article in the *Western Producer* not long ago where a farmer bought a case of grade A eggs and then resold them to the company and obtained a very small percentage of grade A eggs? In my opinion the farmers are greatly underpaid for the eggs they are producing at the present time. This is not a new situation but has prevailed for many years.

I should like to make some reference to the mass delegation that came to Ottawa. I agree wholeheartedly with those who said that it was an excellent delegation composed of people of high calibre, that they presented their brief to the cabinet in a very able manner and that they were a delegation with which any member might be proud to be associated. They arrived in Ottawa, I believe, a month ago to this very day. I am still hopeful that the government will act on the request that they have made, and I am hopeful that the government will react in a favourable way. I am not one of those who think their demands have been excessive.

The western farm delegation, in the presentation they made to the government, asked for deficiency payments which would amount to something in the neighbourhood of \$100 million a year. This may sound like, and it is, a great deal of money. However, when it is related to the government's total budget, it is only about two per cent. If you relate it to the defence budget it is equal to only some six per cent or seven per cent of the national defence budget. I think it will be a small sum to pay for a real measure of agricultural stability and for some assurance that the grain producers in the prairie provinces will not turn their tremendous production potential for grain into the production of larger quantities of other agricultural products.

If that is done, what has been a prairie problem will become a national problem. If there is a continued increase in the production of cattle and hogs as well as the production of other agricultural products because farmers feel that on the basis of the low prices they are receiving for grain they can make a somewhat larger income by marketing their grain through livestock, we will have a collapse of present markets across this country. As a matter of fact, if the government does not act in this regard, and taking into account the statement the minister made the other day about the changed policy for the hog industry, I see a great danger that this, in fact, will happen.

I have no brief whatever for the great corporations that may be engaged in the production of hogs. I believe that under a national marketing act there could be established a system whereby the products of these great companies might not be purchased at all, but that purchases would be made from legitimate agriculture producers, if we are in fact in favour of maintaining the family farm as the basic unit of agriculture production. What the minister has said is that beginning October 1, it is his intention to remove the floor price—

Mr. Harkness: No, no.

Mr. Argue: —as an effective price when the farmer takes his hogs to market.

Mr. Harkness: May I correct the hon. member? I do not think he wants to have a wrong impression go out. On October 1, the floor price will be reduced to \$23.65 from \$25. The change in the method of supporting that floor price will come into effect just as soon as we can get the machinery ready, which might be six weeks or two months.

Mr. Argue: The new system will allow the market to find its own level; that is the point I wish to make. Whatever floor price the minister may set for the individual producer,