

Inquiries of the Ministry

Columbia, 9.9 per cent; Alberta, 9.9 per cent; Ontario, 8.8 per cent; Newfoundland, 46.8 per cent, and decreases were registered in Saskatchewan, 5.2 per cent; Nova Scotia, 14.1 per cent and Prince Edward Island, 5.8 per cent. As of January 5, the quoted price to the producer in Winnipeg for grade A large eggs was 16 cents per dozen, and 11 to 12 cents for small or ungraded.

Now, the stabilization board supports eggs at 34 cents per dozen, and this is handled about September 15 each year. The Canadian people eat about three quarters of an egg per capita per day.

Mr. Bell: That would be scrambled, would it?

Mr. Hays: I can tell the house that we have a big surplus of eggs in Canada and, of course, we have no place to go with them. On January 14, Mr. Speaker, I announced that the Department of Agriculture would purchase about 250,000 pounds of dried eggs as a contribution to the world food program, which relieves the situation somewhat. Then, as I have suggested, we have a stabilization program under which we support eggs at 34 cents per dozen for a maximum of 4,000 dozen. This program we feel is of distinct aid to the producers in Canada. The hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale knows that there are different classes of eggs. There are small eggs, large eggs—

An hon. Member: And bad eggs.

Mr. Hays: And what we call cracked eggs.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hays: These all command different prices but the hon. member always mentions eggs which are selling at a lower price. Grade A large eggs are now selling for about 40 cents a dozen and the price for smaller eggs comes down to about 13 cents a dozen. Nevertheless, on weighted average across Canada eggs are supported under the stabilization price program at 34 cents a dozen, and anywhere they drop below this level producers will receive the difference between 34 cents and the price at which they sold their eggs to the wholesalers.

Mr. Rapp: As a supplementary question, the minister has said there are more eggs than the Canadian people use. Why then did he allow eggs to be imported from other countries where their price is subsidized, thus depressing Canadian prices? Could he not take steps to cut off the importation of eggs from other countries?

[Mr. Hays.]

Mr. Hays: Mr. Speaker, a very small quantity of eggs came into Canada a year ago, but I am not familiar with any that came in recently.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hays: As I say, Mr. Speaker, this is something with which I am not familiar. I shall be glad to take notice of it but I do not believe any eggs came into Canada during the last six or eight months.

STEPS TO ASSIST EASTERN FARMERS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Eric A. Winkler (Grey-Bruce): Mr. Speaker, I wish to direct a related question to the Minister of Agriculture. During the recess I noticed it had been stated that eastern agriculture was in a tremendously depressed condition. Has the minister noted the situation and has he anything to announce that might improve the economic position of eastern farmers?

An hon. Member: Six cows and two pigs.

Hon. Harry W. Hays (Minister of Agriculture): Well, Mr. Speaker, the position of agriculture has not been good for the last seven years. The previous government did nothing for agriculture—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Hays:—absolutely nothing for eastern agriculture, but now the president of the national dairy council says the dairy situation is in better shape than it has been for many years. The hon. member's question concerns government policy, which will be announced later, and I think the program we are going to announce will be of interest to all farmers in Canada.

Mr. Winkler: If the minister is correct can he explain why farmers are saying that in the last two years their prices have gone considerably lower than previously?

Mr. Joseph Slogan (Springfield): As a supplementary question can the minister now explain his statement in Calgary where he said the farmers have never had it so good?

Mr. Speaker: Order please. It seems to me we are getting quite far afield.

SUGAR BEETS—REQUEST FOR SUBVENTION

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

Hon. Théogène Ricard (St. Hyacinthe-Bagot): Mr. Speaker, may I put a question to the Minister of Agriculture?