

will recall that we sometimes met two or three times a day: it was a very busy schedule. However, when I look at the number of witnesses who appeared—in most cases to the satisfaction of the committee—I believe we heard from as many people as required to make a decision and recommendations on this matter.

I wish to mention just a few of the witnesses. We heard from the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan), the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gillespie) and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet). We also heard from representatives of the National Farm Products Marketing Council, the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, the Food Prices Review Board, the marketing boards of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, the Newfoundland Egg Marketing Board, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the federations of agriculture of almost every province, the Canadian Poultry and Egg Council, the Consumers Association of Canada, the National Anti-Poverty Organization, and the University of British Columbia. The following organizations submitted briefs to the committee: the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the Committee to Reform Egg Marketing in Ontario, and the Egg Producers' Association of Quebec.

It was stated that we required more time. All I can say is that we certainly hit all bases as far as representatives from the poultry industry and consumers are concerned. The only thing that could perhaps be faulted is that we could not spend two or three hours or days with each witness. That would have been impossible. I do not think it is necessary to spend a great deal of time if you can question the witnesses and sift through the information to the satisfaction of the committee. I do not believe we required any further witnesses.

There was reference to the fact that the CEMA auditors, Touche, Ross and Company indicated as follows in their report on the agency's financial statements ending June 30, 1974:

Because of our inability to verify egg production levies, the cost of egg surplus removal program and the inventory, and because of the uncertainties arising from the financial position of the agency, we do not express an opinion on the accompanying financial statements for six months ended June 30, 1974.

That is a very harsh indictment of the CEMA board. The hon. member for St. John's East stated that these people should appear before the Standing Committee on Agriculture. I submit that if we look at what was said, they do not know how many eggs were produced, they do not know what the levies were, they do not know the cost of the egg surplus removal program, and the inventory is uncertain. No matter how many committees they appear before, whether it be the agriculture committee or a committee on the commonwealth of nations, they will say the same thing—that they do not know. There is no use bringing in these auditors because, according to the bookkeeping system of CEMA, they cannot tell whether the agency produces eggs or walnuts.

Even though that is a harsh indictment of CEMA by the accounting people, we are not discussing the faults of these people or what they did wrong. They made mistakes, obviously, otherwise we would not have had the committee. The point is, what further information could these people give us if they were called before the agriculture

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committee? I suppose they could elaborate; they could go up and down. However, they would say the same thing, namely, that the accounting procedures of CEMA make it impossible for them to know what is going on.

In all humbleness, I suggest that the hon. member for St. John's East is incorrect in asking that these witnesses appear before a committee of any type, because the same story would come out. Even though they have an inefficient method of counting eggs produced in Canada, and in many cases do not know where they have put the eggs, both the committee and the House could have been saved a lot of trouble if someone had learned the simple fact that you sell the oldest produce first: you do not sell the freshest produce first. What happens is that the old eggs get older and eventually rot. It is a strange thing to see happen in our day and age. We have refrigeration plants which can keep produce fresh for many months; we have modern equipment which can haul produce to refrigerator units; we have cost accounting; we have computers—yet somewhere along the line somebody forgot to tell the people in the warehouse that you don't leave the old eggs in there when you fill orders; you ship out the old ones first.

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The loss of 28 million eggs amounts to an expensive lesson in the correct handling of eggs at a warehouse. I do not think we need expert witnesses before a committee of the House of Commons to tell us this. It is elementary. There is no need for accountants to tell us that they cannot make head or tail of the books. There is no need for provincial representatives to tell us that perhaps they were more interested in the effect on their own areas than in the national picture. All this is contained in testimony which the committee has already heard. We know about the pitfalls. We know where they went wrong.

After hearing this evidence, the committee made its recommendations—the recommendations contained in the report which is now before the House. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there is no way in which the committee can instruct the minister or CEMA to implement these recommendations. That is something for the provinces to consider and for the minister to decide. One of the recommendations which I would strongly urge the minister to carry out, and one which appeals to me on humanitarian grounds, is that surplus eggs should in future be distributed in such a way that senior citizens and people in receipt of welfare funds might make use of them. One of the reasons a surplus of eggs arose was that the egg breakers in Ontario and eastern Canada are controlled to an estimated 70 per cent by one firm, and it was obviously to the advantage of this firm to be able to buy eggs at as low a price as possible, despite the fact that this was bound to create a problem for the egg marketing system which was trying to get a fair price for its product.

Canadians, whether consumers or producers, feel strongly that we cannot afford to allow any food to be destroyed, either through greed or through neglect. Surely we cannot, in today's conditions, allow food which is so desperately needed throughout the world to go to waste here. I believe the CEMA people understand this responsibility and I hope the agony of the committee hearings, the several weeks we spent discussing this problem, made