

steps to protect our environment and improve our living conditions.

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[English]

AGRICULTURE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PROGRAM TO REDUCE EGG SURPLUS

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to announce that negotiations and discussions have been successfully concluded with the provinces and producer groups and that a program designed to adjust egg production to market requirements for Canada has been developed.

As hon. members are aware, the government has been concerned that any assistance it might put into position should be of such a nature and should be coupled with such provincial programs as would bring continuing stability to the industry. I might say that we are particularly concerned that we avoid doing those things that might be counter-productive over a long period of time.

A program has been designed that will provide assistance on a sliding scale to encourage maximum removal of surplus birds within the shortest possible time. Under this formula, if the target is reached within six weeks farmers will receive approximately 90 cents per bird marketed. If the target takes eight weeks to reach, the payment would be about 75 cents per bird.

If the program falls short of the one million bird target the assistance will be less. For example, if only 500,000 extra birds are taken out of the flocks during the eight-week period, the subsidy will be about 45 cents per bird.

The program will be effective from June 5.

This program is designed to stimulate rapid adjustment in fowl numbers thus providing indirect and immediate benefits through price increases to those producers and areas that do not need to adjust fowl holdings while at the same time providing direct assistance to those that need to make adjustments. To receive assistance under the program producers will require proof of sale to a registered poultry processing plant or a recognized certificate of disposal.

Full details of the program, including the method of claiming, will be sent to the industry immediately. In the meantime I would advise that producers should retain all receipts showing the disposition of fowl removed in the period.

Mr. R. E. McKinley (Huron): Mr. Speaker, the statement that has just been made by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) is in effect a fowl buying program, although he did not wish to call it that. Another fowl buying program was announced last October 29—I have that statement here, Mr. Speaker—which was to be carried out over an eight-week period. So there is a familiar ring when in the present statement the minister says that this program will be in effect for an eight-week period. Following the earlier program I asked the minister the following question on March 16, 1972, as recorded on page 889 of *Hansard*:

Surplus Egg Reduction Program

With regard to the fowl buying program announced by the government last year under which assistance was going to be given to producers, how much money was paid to producers under that program?

The minister's answer was:

None, Mr. Speaker.

Most of us know of the terrible situation in the egg-producing industry in Canada today. Over 202,000 30-dozen cases a week are being produced. That is about 10,000 or 15,000 too many, and there has to be a cutback in order that egg producers can make a decent living in this country. This situation has gone on too long.

I am happy to see that the federal government and the Minister of Agriculture have negotiated on a little better terms with the egg producers and the provinces than they have with the provinces in regard to the small farms development program which we heard about in committee this morning from some of the provinces. I hope the minister has listened to better advice in working out the details of this program than he did on the previous one and that the program will do some good. I do not know whether the minister is aware of the normal laying period of a hen, but I think he should suggest that all hens that have been in production for ten months or more should be marketed through this program. That might be of some assistance. More direction has to come from the minister and he should listen to people who know what they are talking about.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggart): Mr. Speaker, it would have been helpful if the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) had given us more information. We know that negotiations have been going on between the provinces and the federal Department of Agriculture to work out a program of egg marketing under Bill C-176 which was passed by the House a year ago. One question that was seriously raised in committee at that time was whether sufficient information would be provided to the producer and indeed to Parliament when national marketing programs got under way. I suggest to the minister and to the House that the information that has been given to us at this time is sketchy, to say the least.

For instance, in addition to the fowl slaughtering program, which can be only one facet of a total approach, what is going to be done about the import of eggs from other countries? The minister referred to supply management being achieved between the provinces. If this is the case, what is going to be done about imports? What is the policy? No information is given. What is the actual division between the provinces? We do not have that information. We have not been told what the formula is for distributing the money. If fewer birds are killed the price per bird goes down. One area may have fulfilled its obligation and another area that has not will suffer. There are too many unanswered questions. The minister may have the answers, and I would be pleased if he would provide them to the House at some future time.