

*Egg and Hog Grading*

passed, the matter was simply referred back to the provinces, especially the province of Quebec.

To-day the hon. member offers a motion with regard to hog and egg grading, and asks to have it accepted by the farmers in this house. My recollection is that a few years ago Sir George Foster brought before the House of Commons a measure to have eggs sold by the pound. After discussion by members then sitting in the house the suggestion was considered unsatisfactory and was withdrawn. I must say that I see a difference between a small egg and a large egg. I do not think a consumer would pay as much for a dozen small pullet eggs as he would for the larger ones. When we go to buy eggs in the Montreal markets we find that there is a difference in the prices of eggs, small and large. The purse of the consumer also must be graded. If the Montreal consumer, paying forty cents for a dozen eggs, received four big eggs and eight small ones, he would be the subject of exploitation. On the other hand we do not want to exploit the farmer. We must remember that the consumers in the city like to get what they pay for, especially the working men in the labouring districts.

The hon. member said there should be a difference between the price paid for bad eggs and that paid for good ones. That is a reasonable and normal proposition. Certainly no one has a right to sell bad eggs on the market. The hon. member has told about shipping eggs to the city of Montreal. He said that four bad eggs were found in a crate shipped to the eastern townships and then immediately shipped back to Montreal. I do not think the fault could be traced to the egg dealer in Montreal or to the wholesale merchant. I believe it was only an accident. The hon. member cannot get away from the fact that the crate came from the country to Montreal. The four eggs were put in the crate before they were returned to the hon. member's district, and I believe it was just a case of error. One cannot draw a general conclusion from such circumstances.

The remarks of my hon. friend bring to my mind another point. When last year he spoke about milk, and again to-day about hogs and eggs, he said that the farmer is not satisfied, nor is he himself satisfied with the government's present agricultural measures. Why is he not satisfied? I must remind the hon. member that the administration is in the hands of the party to which he belongs; he is friendly to the government now in power. Why has he not asked before, and why does he

[Mr. P. Mercier.]

not ask immediately for some redress for the grievances about which he has spoken? To-day he suggests that the question of hog grading and egg grading be submitted to the committee on agriculture. In my view the result would be the same as it was last year in connection with milk and milk products, namely lots of noise and plenty of soap box speeches, but no action or results for the farmers.

Mr. J. T. HACKETT (Stanstead): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a word in support of the resolution of the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Pickel). I believe that these regulations are so complicated—and I am now speaking particularly of those concerning poultry and eggs—as to make them unworkable. It is impossible for the ordinary farmer to grade his own produce, with the result that he must ship it to town and take the returns which come to him, without any possibility of verification or checking. I do not suggest that all packers and all middlemen are unjust and unfair, but it has come to my knowledge, and an instance has been given to-day by the hon. member introducing the resolution, that unfair practices are sometimes indulged in by the middleman. We do know that the producer is receiving a price for his commodities which, when compared with the prices paid in the cities for those commodities, is altogether too low. It occurs to me that it would be well to have these regulations inquired into and thoroughly revised. I know, for instance, that a club just outside of Montreal began buying its eggs from a producer, and it immediately came into conflict with these regulations because the producer was unable to give the certificate, which can emanate only from a licensed dealer. As the producer, the small producer at all events, can never qualify for the licence, he is not permitted to deal in these commodities, in a way that is profitable to himself. It might be that a produce exchange in the large centres which would provide for the carrying out of this inspection and the application of the act under the joint auspices of the producer, the middleman and the consumer would remedy the ills of which the farmer so justifiably, in my estimation, complains.

I think there are too many classes and kinds of poultry and eggs. I have, for instance, before me the regulations, and I find that ducks for purposes of marketing are divided into ducks and ducklings. A duckling reaches maturity eleven or twelve weeks after hatching, yet under the grading act a duck which is much older than that may be classi-