

Supply—Agriculture

Mr. Charlton: We are not too many hours apart, Mr. Chairman. What is required to put a product under the Export and Import Permits Act; an order in council?

Mr. Gardiner: Oh, something along that line.

Mr. Argue: Something along that line?

Mr. Charlton: Why do the government refuse to put cheese under the Export and Import Permits Act, in view of the trouble they have had?

Mr. Gardiner: If you will allow me to explain it will probably save time. You will note I stated that cheese did come under this act from 1949 to 1953. We are four years away from 1953, and cheese is not under this act at present. But that does not mean that there is no floor price under cheese. Under the Agricultural Products Co-operative Marketing Act we put a price of 24 cents under cheese for, I think, two years. That is, we supported the price with the cheese board at the bank up to 24 cents. Then last year it became 22½ cents, I think. But during all that period the Ontario government, put 6 cents on top of that which, when it was first put on, made a floor price of 30 cents a pound on cheese. That is one of the reasons cheese has been staying at around 30 cents and over 30 cents for the last two or three years.

Mr. Charlton: It is to the credit of the Ontario cheese board.

Mr. Gardiner: The cheese board; and we support the cheese board to get the funds with which to meet the initial payment, and the Ontario government supports the cheese board in order to see to it that the price is 6 cents above what we have supported it at. So there is a floor price under cheese in the province of Ontario right through. That would not bring it under the Export and Import Permits Act, as has been suggested, even if the fact was that a floor price had been set up to support it. It has been suggested that this would automatically bring it under the act, but I do not think even that automatically brings it under the act. In the last day or two I have had some discussions, the results of which I may be in a position to announce tomorrow or the next day, which do not affect cheese but which have taught me a few things. I should not say they do not affect cheese, but they do not affect it directly. They have given me some ideas as to what the act really does provide for.

Mr. White (Hastings-Frontenac): I should like to ask the minister a question about this much talked about cheese. I think it is quite clear that no permit is required to import cheese. But if I understood the minister correctly a few minutes ago, he said that under

this so-called agreement you could import cheese only by obtaining a permit. That hardly sounds consistent. I should like to ask the minister if it is not true that if any cheese company in Canada wishes to import cheese from New Zealand there is no legal obstacle in the way of that company importing cheese in any quantity simply on paying the duty. Is that not correct?

Mr. Gardiner: There is no legal obstacle in the sense in which my hon. friend is speaking of it, and there is no permit required in the sense that somebody writes out a permit and presents it. But the government of New Zealand will not ship cheese here unless the government here gives consent to it coming.

Mr. White (Hastings-Frontenac): When the minister speaks of a permit, does he mean under the Export and Import Permits Act?

Mr. Gardiner: It does not mean under any act. It means there is a gentleman's agreement; and our experience is that New Zealand keeps its gentleman's agreements.

Mr. White (Hastings-Frontenac): There is really no such thing as a permit? There is no permit required, in effect?

Mr. Gardiner: There must be consent. You can call it a permit or anything you like.

Mr. White (Hastings-Frontenac): Why not stop all that camouflage and put cheese under the Export and Import Permits Act?

Mr. Gardiner: I think what you are suggesting and what most people have been suggesting is to put a tariff on it and be through with it.

Mr. White (Hastings-Frontenac): Do both.

Mr. Argue: Under this item I wonder whether the minister could say what formula, if any, is used in paying a support price for eggs. I know it is supposed to be 38 cents for grade A large, and that is cut to 32 cents a dozen. But is there a formula by which the support prices are paid? Does the formula cover grade A medium eggs or grade B eggs, or is it set only on grade A large eggs? Can the minister say what action has been taken as a result of the very strong representations made to the cabinet by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture on February 15 of this year with regard to this subject? I might quote briefly from their brief:

We strongly urge that a system be set up for egg price supports that will guarantee to producers a floor price of 32 cents per dozen on grade A large eggs at all times.

And the words "at all times" are underlined. When the minister is answering that