

million eggs had gone bad. This revelation in the *Globe and Mail* prompted a report that the number of eggs destroyed might be as high as 200 million, a figure attributed to the president of Export Packers of Toronto who was reported in the press to this effect on September 7. The same article quotes the Consumers' Association of Canada describing CEMA as "a mismanaged monopoly" and urges that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) abolish it and return to the law of supply and demand. That comes from the president of the Consumers' Association of Canada who wrote to the Prime Minister on September 13 regarding the element of cover-up. This is what the president of CAC had to say in his letter:

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It does appear as well that there may to date have been a substantial element of the cover-up in this situation.

The president of CAC went on in the letter to call for a complete and candid disclosure of all the facts with respect to CEMA—which we have not had to date—and to ask for a judicial or parliamentary inquiry. The president of the Consumers' Association of Canada is not speaking for some local minority interest group; his is the only group which speaks for consumers throughout the country. The association's annual grant from the government has gone from \$100,000 to \$250,000 a year. I suggest that if the association is worthy of a yearly grant of \$250,000 from the government, we should pay attention to what it has to say.

We are now going to get an inquiry, but let me just continue with the background. The Food Prices Review Board, in an unusual display of frustration over government inaction—I do not say this disparagingly or offensively, but God knows there have been many occasions for them to express frustration—released a second report on eggs, the number two report. We already have had the number one report, and we now have number two. Egg report number two was released by the board on August 28, and in it the board reaffirmed the recommendations contained in the first egg report. Then it went even further and accused the federal and provincial governments—here the board was getting very close to the minister—of permitting the mismanagement of egg marketing in Canada. The board then went on to say, if I may paraphrase the second egg report, that surpluses prove that the price to the producer is too high and should be lowered as soon as possible, again repeating the principal conclusions of egg report number one.

I think it is relevant and pertinent to quote this sentence from the report, especially in the context of the subsequent revelations contained in the report on marketing boards by Professor Forbes which the government had tried to suppress:

The marketing board approach to income support for egg producers which has been followed in the past year has proven costly to producers and to consumers.

The board claimed that in its opinion changes were needed in this policy, and it suggested two possible changes. First, it recommended that the government give consideration to implementing a short-term program of deficiency payments. Second, it recommended a long-term program of income supplements. We have yet to hear any reaction from the government to these recommendations

Canadian Egg Marketing Agency

of the Food Prices Review Board. The release of that report had some rather interesting side effects. The report was first preceded by a speech by Mrs. Plumptre—the outspoken Mrs. Plumptre—at the CNE on August 21, 1974, in which she blamed the federal government for "unjustifiably high prices" for eggs in Canada. That is a direct quote from the chairman of the Food Prices Review Board.

What was the reaction of the government to that speech? The Minister of Agriculture, in his usual folksy way, and I would say rather unchivalrously, referred to that speech by the lady as "hogwash". He went on to issue a warning to Mrs. Plumptre to get her facts straight, or else. Then he is reported to have said, with respect to consumer representation on marketing boards, that as far as the Farm Products Marketing Council was concerned, it would be over his dead body. Although physically the minister may be very much alive, I suggest to the House that politically he is as dead as the 28 million eggs that he allowed to rot in storage.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McGrath: Following the rude reaction of the minister, a rather unusual scene unfolded. There was a public dispute between two ministers of the government. Enter the new Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet). With the ink hardly dry on his commission, and to spread his wings and show the people of Canada that he was independent, that he for one was prepared to speak for the consumers of this country even if the minister would not, he took great exception to the Minister of Agriculture's rude remarks about Mrs. Plumptre. Then the Prime Minister entered the fray. When asked to comment on the spectacle of two ministers quarrelling and disagreeing in public, he said that the Minister of Agriculture was doing his job for the farmers and that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs was merely doing his job for the consumers.

What a beautifully orchestrated scenario! It would make the Royal Ballet of Canada look sick. Here was the Prime Minister in the East Block calling the shots, telling his new consumer affairs minister to get out and flex his muscles. Then we had the great champion of the farmers. It would be humorous if it were not so phony. If we did have this kind of independence in the government, it would be encouraging indeed.

What are the facts? The indisputable fact is that egg prices in Canada throughout this whole affair have been allowed to rise. They have risen more rapidly than any other foodstuff, and the minister knows that is true.

Mr. Roy (Laval): Rubbish.

Mr. McGrath: Tell that to your constituents when egg prices go up as they have been doing. I suggest that you will get some of those rotten eggs that are stored in Quebec thrown right at you.

So you have the paradox that in the midst of these rising egg prices, consumption of eggs has actually declined while production of eggs has been allowed to rise. If this does not smack of mismanagement, what does? Then there is the intriguing question of the 50 million eggs to be sold to Austria. I have not been satisfied that that has been