

*Egg Marketing Committee Report*

the eggs are to be broken in any event, there is no point in storing them for a long period. Why not break them right away? I think that was the committee's view. Many eggs that we eat today have been stored, not by CEMA but by the supermarket chains. They store the eggs until they can sell them at an advantageous price. This course has sometimes resulted in egg spoilage, as most housewives can tell you. If eggs were to be marketed within seven days of being laid, there would be no spoilage and housewives would not complain.

The other day the Minister of Agriculture said that unless CEMA functions more adequately, he will disband the organization. Farm marketing legislation gives him the right to abolish the agency. Experts appearing before the committee were opposed to marketing legislation, but they agreed that in the final analysis marketing legislation was beneficial. They did not support a national egg marketing agency. It was pointed out that bringing together the 33 people involved in CEMA was a major undertaking. However, unless the agency can work satisfactorily, its policies will again lead to disaster and the alternative will be one national marketing agency which will control all egg production in this country, in the same way as one board controls industrial milk. Although this course may simplify administration, it will not have the support of most ministers of agriculture in this country.

I hope the minister will tell the House which recommendations of the board he has put into effect. Personally, I think the committee did a good job and the government should heed its recommendations, as well as recommendations made by the ministers of agriculture who met late in November. Everyone agreed that if the agency could be made to work properly, producers would benefit, as would consumers who would have available high quality eggs at stable prices.

**Mr. Hugh A. Anderson (Comox-Alberni):** Mr. Speaker, before commenting on what other hon. members have said, I would speak about the situation which existed a few years ago in the egg industry. The industry experienced ups and downs; prices to consumers fluctuated and returns to producers fluctuated. The result was that many producers went out of business, and when high profits were to be made, the few who remained in business made them. In our society the farmer is not organized, nor is he part of a pressure group. He does not belong to an association of the kind to which doctors, lawyers and other professional people belong; that is, to an association which will safeguard his job and in some cases guarantee his income. Safeguards are necessary if people are to buy expensive equipment. The farmer buys land as well as equipment.

Members of occupational associations do not worry so much about booms or busts which have been traditional in agriculture. The farmer is alone, open to the elements and to the caprices of markets in which he is forced to sell. I do not think anyone in this House suggests that the farmer's position is enviable. He cannot foresee the weather. If he is a poultry producer, he does not know if and when disease may strike. If he is successful he may find, on going to market, that other farmers have been successful as well; and plenty in the marketplace means a low price to the farmer but, of course, a beneficial price to the consumer.

[Mr. Peters.]

I suppose many farmers and others in Canada have looked into this situation. I am proud to say that British Columbia was among the first provinces to consider the establishment of marketing boards. It is unfortunate that after our first experiment in establishing a national marketing agency so many eggs were destroyed because of mismanagement by the board. I do not think the farmer, the egg producer or the poultry producer was happy to see 28 million eggs destroyed. The consumer was not happy, either. When something like this happens, we all lose.

You must realize, Mr. Speaker, that there was a genuine desire for order in an industry which had experienced ups and downs, booms and busts and havoc for many years. The fact that 28 million eggs were destroyed after one year of operation does not detract from the marketing concept; it only proves that after a short period of time you cannot handle a large industry like this. You need control and expertise which is only developed over many years. You must become professional.

● (1630)

I have no idea whether the egg marketing concept will still exist in one or two years from now. However, if it fails, it will be a sorry day for both the consumer and the farmer. I have two views on this. I realize there was incompetence; there were managers who did not manage and producers who overproduced or tried to hide what they had produced. As a result, it is not just one man or one government that is at fault in this matter. I believe it results from a combination of all parts of the marketing scheme. If we are going to lay blame, let us put that blame on all sectors; let us not look for one man as a scapegoat.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Anderson:** I hear some members of the opposition laughing. We have one Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), but we have many members. Don't blame the Prime Minister, the leader.

**An hon. Member:** The buck has to stop somewhere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Don't blame the general of the army if a battle is lost, because a general is only one man. This question involves many other people.

**Mr. Lawrence:** There's an old Chinese saying: He who gets swimming pool gets blame.

**Mr. Anderson:** I hear comments from the other side. I am glad they are awake.

**Mr. Lawrence:** We are, but it's a real effort.

**Mr. Anderson:** There were many parts of an organization, not just one or two. There is no use blaming the chairman of CEMA, the marketing board, the Premier of British Columbia or the Premier of Newfoundland. It is not fair to go after the jugular vein of one man in this House, because he was not the only man involved. I do not believe, in the short time we had to make this report, that that is the evidence that turned up. I wish to say a few words about the time-frame. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) stated that the committee worked within a time-frame. Members of the committee