**MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1949**

**Legislative Assembly, 18 August 1949, pages 355-6**

Second reading

**The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS (Newcastle —Minister of Agriculture)—**This Bill makes two amendments to the Marketing of Eggs Act— one dealing with the Auditor-General’s annual report on prices and costs, and the other with the period of operation of the Act. By section 16 of the Act it is provided that the Auditor-General must, within three months after the end of each financial year, report to the Minister on the question whether the board’s prices for eggs are reasonable, and whether its work is done economically. It has been found difficult to prepare these reports within the statutory time limit of three months after the end of the financial year. During that period the Auditor-General and his officers are engaged in preparing the annual report for Parliament on the public finances of the State and they find it difficult to do that and at the same time keep up with all the ordinary day to day work of the Audit Department. It would be of considerable help to the Auditor-General if he were allowed six months after the end of each financial year within which to prepare the report on the Egg Board. The Government therefore asks Parliament to make an amendment for this purpose.

The other amendment, which is made by clause 4, extends the operation of the prin­cipal Act to September 30, 1954. Under the present law the Act, if not extended, will expire at the end of September of this year. There is a general demand for the continuance of the present marketing scheme which is now firmly established, and the Government has decided to ask Parliament to extend it for a further five years. The Bill, if approved, will effect such an extension.

As I knew members would like some information on what has happened since the Egg Board came into existence on August 10, 1942, I have had the following figures prepared showing the quantities of eggs handled by the board, and the average prices to producer:—

For the year prior to the board’s taking over the control of marketing, the system of purchasing eggs adopted by the Egg Equalization Committee Ltd. came under two categories: one, the graded return to producers, and the other the flat rate. For the year 1941-42 the net return to producers was on a basis of the graded return 10.2d. per dozen and the flat rate 10.26d. per dozen. The above figures show that the year 1947-48 was a record production year, with a total of 14,093,470 dozens. For the year ended June 30, 1949, the production was 14,181,330 dozens, showing a decline of 512,140 dozens as compared with the record production year of 1947-48. This is equivalent to a drop of 3.5 per cent. I am sorry that the results this year indicate a still further falling off. The reason, I assume, is the high cost of foodstuffs and the difficulty of obtaining mill offal. I feel, too, that the House would be interested in the prices charged to consumers in South Australia as compared with other States. During’the last few months we have heard much about the high cost of eggs in South Australia. I tried to ascertain whether consumers in South Australia were being unfairly penalized compared with those in other States. I found that in the months from January to June this year the prices per dozen to consumers in four States were:—

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Month. | Vic. | N.SW. | W.A. | S.A. |
|  | s. d. | s. | d. | s. d. | s. | d. |
| Jan. . . | 2 114 | 2 | 10\* | 2 94 | 2 | 94 |
| Feb. . . | 3 34 | 3 | 14 | 2 114 | 3 | Oi |
| March | 3 34 | 3 | 44 | 3 Oi | 3 | 04 |
| April . . | 3 44 | 3 | 44 | 3 14 | 3 | 14 |
| May . . | 3 6i | 3 | 44 | 3 34 | 3 | 14 |
| June . . | 3 6\* | 3 | U | 3 34 | 3 | 14 |

That shows that during this period, consumers in South Australia did not have to pay the high prices which prevailed in the eastern States. The prices here were comparable with those paid in Western Australia.

Mr. Dunks—Who fixes the prices?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—At present, the Prices Commissioner.

Mr. Dunks—Are they not supposed to be uniform throughout Australia?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—In South Australia the Prices Commissioner always discusses the matter with the Egg Board. I understand that in some of the other States the Prices Commissioner accepts the figure given to him by the local Egg Boards.

Mr. Macgillivray—How did the prices of foodstuffs compare during those months?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—I assume that as the sale price of wheat is fixed at the same level in all the States, the prices of mill offal would be comparable. I was interested to know how the producers had fared in the various States over the same period. I found that the prices they had received per dozen during that period were as follows:—■

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Month. | Yic. | N.S.W. | W.A. | S.A. |
|  | s. d. | s | d. | s. | d. | s. | d. |
| Jan. . | 2 3.4 | 2 | 3.1 | 2 | 1.9 | 2 | 2.3 |
| Feb. . | 2 6.4 | 2 | 6.1 | 2 | 3.9 | 2 | 5.3 |
| March | 2 6.4 | 2 | 9.1 | 2 | 4.9 | 2 | 5.3 |
| April | 2 7.9 | 2 | 9.1 | 2 | 5.9 | 2 | 6.3 |
| May . | 2 9.9 | 2 | 9.1 | 2 | 7.9 | 2 | 6.3 |
| June . | 2 9.9 | 2 | 9.1 | 2 | 7.9 | 2 | 6.3 |

It will be noted from those figures that again;, the prices in Western Australian and South Australia are very similar, whereas in the eastern States the prices were- higher.

Mr. Dunks—Was that for first- grade eggs?

The Hon. Sir GEOEGE JENKINS—That was the average price paid for those months.

Mr. Maegillivray—-That is not very good for the South Australian producer.

The Hon. Sir GEOEGE JENKINS—Our prices were a little below those paid to pro­ducers in the other States, except Western^ Australia. There has to be some relationship between the price paid for eggs and our export price. The price for export eggs prior to June 1, 1948, was 2s. Id. per dozen f.o.b. Australian currency. Prom June 1, 1948, the price rose to 2s. 4d. and from June 1, 1949,. to 2s. 7d. That was for first grade export eggs. When the United Kingdom was approached on the question of increasing the priee for export eggs because of the increased cost of production here, it agreed to the rise,, although it had a contract with Australia. Under this scheme producers have had a decided benefit. Instead of having to sell eggs at any price during gluts, the board has been able to stabilize prices, and at the same time consumers have received eggs at prices which compare favourably with those paid in the eastern States. I move the second reading.

The Hon. R. S. RICHARDS secured the adjournment of the debate.