

*Supply—Agriculture*

**Mr. Korchinski:** How would he know? He was not at your C.C.F. meeting.

**Mr. Grafftey:** That is tantamount to asking someone if he has stopped beating his wife.

*(Translation):*

**Mr. Roberge:** Mr. Chairman, I do not want to let this opportunity slip by without saying a few words on the estimates of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Harkness). The brief remarks I propose to make concern mainly dairy products.

Mr. Chairman, this morning, while reading *Le Devoir*, I was somewhat surprised to find a report announcing a probable change in support prices within a few days. I was still more surprised, of course, to hear the Minister of Agriculture announce early today, certain changes in respect of support prices—and I wonder why he chose the 23rd of April to do so.

The minister obviously knew that his estimates would come up today, and for his sake I wish they will not be again taken up tomorrow—

**Mr. Martin (Essex East):** I am very much afraid they will be.

**Mr. Roberge:**—but I have great doubts, as the hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) just said, that the minister will be able to get through with them today.

At any rate, I think the minister would have been well advised to wait until his estimates had been considered before making that statement. Hon. members would thus have been able to express their views, not only on support prices, but on other issues connected with his department, because it has been recognized that members of this house must be the spokesmen of the people in their ridings and, in fact, of all Canadians.

Now, it appears that many organizations in this country do not in the least approve this afternoon's statement made by the minister in this house, and I shall, to this effect, refer to the brief submitted on March 18, 1959 by the Ontario Milk Producers Co-ordinating Board. On looking over this brief we find that it does not at all agree with the minister's statement. As a matter of fact, the Ontario producers' brief asked, amongst other things, for a support price, and this is what it said:

*(Text):*

A support price of 15 cents per pound for spray process powder be retained and that the support price for roller process powder be 13 cents per pound.

[Mr. Argue.]

*(Translation):*

We now find that the Minister of Agriculture ignored the request of those producers, as he did the remarks made here by hon. members.

I understand the government has announced that the support price for dry spray processed milk is to be reduced from 15 to 10 cents a pound, and that the support price on any roller processed milk will be reduced from 10 to 8 cents a pound. Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, time did not allow full consideration of the hon. minister's statement, for the simple reason that he did not send copy of it to the hon. members of this house, as he did to newspapermen.

Also, if I am not mistaken, the hon. minister's statement announces a lower support price on cheese.

The Ontario farmers' council asked that the support prices established last year be extended for at least another year. However, that body was not the only one concerned with hog prices; in fact, when those delegates came to Ottawa, they were also supported by several other associations.

I also remember that when we met with a farmers' delegation in our caucus chamber, Quebec farm representatives were in full agreement with the suggestions made by those of Ontario.

It is noteworthy, Mr. Chairman, that I have received from a single parish in my constituency—and I do not mean to say that others could not have done likewise—a petition signed by 75 farmers urging the government to continue support prices from May 1, 1959 to May 1, 1960, at the same level as those of 1958-1959. Those farmers asked, more specifically, that support prices for milk, hogs, butter and milk powder be maintained at the same level as those of last year.

Why is the government changing its position at this time? I wonder also if that decision is not in line with a speech made by the hon. Minister of Agriculture last September or October to a group of farmers, when he told them that they should reduce their production because they probably would not receive any government help in the way of price support. Besides there might well be a certain connection between the round the world trip undertaken by the Right Hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) and the support prices that the Minister of Agriculture has announced today.