

came into force a few hours later. As I stated last Friday, it should have been announced at least 15 days before the new year. Following that announcement, Canadian producers, especially those of the eastern part of the country, had to send petitions and requests to the Minister of Agriculture in connection with the new policy. That request, which deserved the immediate attention of the federal authorities, was signed by producers who sell a total of 3,202,884 pounds of cheese on the local market.

Because of the new policy, they had to raise the retail price of cheese by 4 cents a pound on the local market; this constitutes an increase of \$128,155.36 for consumers.

The following people signed the request:

Marcel Descôteau, of St. Grégoire de Nicolet, Paul-Émile Dionne, the farm co-operative society of St. Germain, Drummond county, Marcel Lemaire, of St. Cyrille, Drummond county, François Richard, of Kingsey Falls, Gérard Grenier, of Victoriaville, Henri Provencher, of Princeville, and Félicien Lemaire of Ste. Perpétué, who have sold, as I said, a total of 3,202,884 pounds of cheese on the local market. Allow me to read this request:

Mr. Minister:

We are all cheese producers of the central part of the province of Quebec, more particularly in the counties of Nicolet-Yamaska, Drummond-Arthabaska and St. Maurice-Lafèche.

We are informed of the new policy concerning the subsidy on the production of cheese.

We submit that in order to conform with the regulations established on May 1, 1964, while at the same time providing consumers with the fresh cheese they are looking for, we would necessarily have to increase the price of cheese by 4 cents a pound or reduce by 30 cents per cwt. the price paid to farmers.

In each case, there would be an obvious prejudice which could entail very serious effects on our economy.

Consequently, we ask you to reconsider the matter in order to find a fair solution. In fact, we add that this problem is really urgent, which is quite evident.

Yours truly,

In my opinion, the Department of Agriculture should give favourable consideration to this request. I do not intend to refer to all the points I brought up last Friday, but I should like the Department of Agriculture to announce officially that the request has been received, considered and that the department will allow cheese producers who sell their products on the local market to benefit from a subsidy of 3.6 cents per pound with respect to first class cheese.

At present, these producers have to keep the cheese for a period of eight to ten days then send a piece of about 20 pounds for grading in Montreal. If they were allowed

to sell this cheese immediately, while it is fresh, provided they kept a 20-pound piece in storage for a period of ten days, to be sent later for grading, I think it would be possible to do so. This would also enable those producers to benefit from this 3.6 cents a pound subsidy on grade "A" cheese and they would not be forced to raise by 4 cents a pound the retail price of cheese because efforts should tend to increase and not to discourage consumption.

Mr. Speaker, it is in this aspect of the new government policy that I am particularly interested and that is why I am asking the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Beer), to answer my question tonight, as I know that this question has been carefully examined by the department's authorities. Therefore, I hope that this answer will favour the producers-manufacturers of my constituency.

[Text]

Mr. B. S. Beer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the hon. member for his question, which I think might be divided into two parts: First of all, did the Minister of Agriculture receive a request from certain manufacturers of cheese in the province of Quebec, and second the hon. member asked for some clarification of policy. This petition was received by the Minister of Agriculture and was appropriately—

Mr. Vincent: Discarded.

Mr. Beer: —discussed and dealt with. I think it is necessary, Mr. Speaker, to clarify the fact that we are dealing with cheese made from pasteurized milk, where the policy is that the cheese must be held for eight days; it is then graded, and if it grades 94 a premium of two cents is available; if it grades 93 a premium of one cent is available. The question, of course, has to do with the sale of fresh, or green cheese. If the manufacturer of cheese wants to dispose of his cheese prior to the eight days, of course he immediately forfeits the premiums that are available. But arrangements have been made whereby if an amount of cheese is held by the manufacturer until a grader arrives, then all the milk from which the cheese was made will be eligible for the 3.6 cents per pound assistance. I believe that is a clarification of the policy which the hon. member wished, and I think it is probably a tribute to the alertness of the department officials that this matter was taken into consideration even before the petition was received.