

Cattle and Beef Tariff

bers on this side are not surprised at the announcement which comes after weeks of continual pressure by the beef producing industry and members of the opposition parties because of the tremendous hardships that were caused the beef producing industry by the removal of the tariff. The removal of the tariff was a part of the policy of the government in its endeavour to reduce the prices of staple foods to consumers in this country. But, Mr. Speaker, we in this party knew, as did all members of the House and the producers, that the removal of the tariff would not cause prices to drop at the consumer level. Unfortunately, we have been proved to be correct in this assumption.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danforth: The indiscriminate removal of the tariff by the government, through the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), brought about the chaotic conditions that exist in the industry today. We welcome the announcement by the minister of the restoration of the tariff on beef imported from the United States.

● (1110)

We are surprised that the government did not press more strongly for reciprocal action by the United States. The minister said this morning that if the American government is disposed to consult with him on an agreement to lower the tariffs of the two countries, the government would be interested. Just a few months ago the government was not at all interested; it was interested only in reducing the tariff on beef coming into this country. The precipitate action taken at that time played havoc among the primary producers. We must have a stable agricultural industry if we expect the primary producers to produce the food that Canadians need so much at this time.

Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, my colleague beside me says that I had better remember that I am a consumer. I remember that when I am in a supermarket. The most significant part of the minister's statement this morning is that part saying that it is essential to restore confidence to the beef industry. The government's precipitate and unilateral action in the matter of the tariff destroyed, in the first place, the confidence that existed in the beef industry. That is a reflection on the action of the government. Whether there was an attempt by the government to achieve reciprocal action by the United States and how strong that attempt was we have no way of knowing because we have not had a full report on the matter to the House.

The same remarks hold true with respect to the blocking of exports of beef to the United States for a period. Again, this action caught the ordinary producer at a bad time. It interrupted deliveries and reduced the price to beef producer. Only now are they beginning to assess the situation in which they find themselves.

We also have a new feed grains policy which is certainly going to have an adverse effect on beef and meat production in western Canada. The full effects of that policy were not considered and measured before it was put into effect.

I certainly agree with the previous speaker that our prime objective should be adequate supplies of food for

[Mr. Danforth.]

the consumer. We will only achieve that if the producer has confidence in the future of his industry and feels he can safely invest the money necessary to produce the food that Canadians need. If the statement made today indicates that this fact has at last come home to the government, that the Minister of Agriculture, (Mr. Whelan) is aware of it, then I think he should stay in this House and not go to Ontario. If he is still not aware of it, then the sooner he goes to Ontario the better.

[Translation]

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, once again, I have to make some unpleasant remarks. I am sorry to have to do so because I much prefer to pay compliments. I am astounded to find that in spite of all the efforts made in this House to try to implement the principle of bilingualism, it is only by accident that we can obtain bilingual statements. With the little knowledge of English I possess, I have been compelled to try to understand as quickly as possible the contents of the minister's statement. I am asking, once more, that efforts be made to respect the bilingual character of this forum if we want the whole of the country to respect the principle of bilingualism.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, about the statement just made by the minister that consumers are very worried about the increase in food prices. Even this morning, before coming to the House, I had a telephone call asking me what steps were being considered by the government to allow consumers to supply themselves at prices corresponding to their income. I had to say that, in the first place, I was opposed to a price freeze because this would not benefit low or middle income families.

I experienced this during the 1939-45 war. I still have my rationing book and I know that, then, those who had money could purchase on the black market anything at any price. They did not deprive themselves, but the small earners were forced to use the infamous rationing coupons. Mr. Speaker, small people were rationed before the war because there was no money, then they were rationed during the war because they had money. They are always rationed.

Here is my suggestion: That means be taken, at any one of the government levels, to transform our fodder plants and our grains that we can produce in very great quantities, in our country, into foods of all kinds: beef meat, pork meat, fowl meat or eggs.

This would allow grain producers to find a profitable domestic market and, at the same time, the greatest possible number of individuals could be employed to process those grains into food for Canadian consumers. We should certainly take temporary measures, but above all I think that we should take long term measures to provide in the years to come a sufficient production to meet the needs of the public and this at decent prices for families with low and average incomes.

[English]

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I apologize to the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) for not having copies of the statement in both official languages. That was not my intention. I felt that because the topic was so urgent it was necessary to make the announcement in the House while the House was still