

I think the committee and, of course, the potato growers as well are entitled to clarification on those two points.

Mr. Harris: During the past several months I have had a great many transactions with my hon. friend. Now that he has brought up the subject of the Canadian people eating fewer and fewer potatoes, may I suggest that he might eat a few more than he has been eating, and perhaps he would not qualify for the suspicion that attends upon lean and hungry people, and that we should have fat people who sleep at night and are in better humour. However, that may be—

Mr. Green: I am in good humour.

Mr. Harris: You might help the potato industry in British Columbia if you indulged in eating them a little more.

There was no intention on my part to be vague about what is happening in respect to the application to the tariff board and then to the government for assistance to the potato industry of Canada. If I emphasized the concern of the potato industry for the United States market, I think I correctly interpreted the attitude of the potato industry. They have great advantages in the United States market, and they do not want to lose those advantages. Indeed I think if a choice were made in having any change made, they would prefer to leave it as it is, because in their application they said they would want the Canadian tariff on potatoes entering from the United States to be extended for a greater period than the seasonal six weeks, but only if the United States tariff were not changed against Canadian potatoes. If I have emphasized that throughout everything I have said on this subject, I believe I have placed the emphasis correctly.

The United States market for seed potatoes is one thing; the United States market for table potatoes is another. Both of them are valuable. The hon. member for Kent has just sent me a note saying that 37 carloads of potatoes left a town in his riding just last week. That is a very considerable shipment to the United States. Therefore it is not entirely a matter of concern for the maritime potato growers but, in fact, for Ontario and the west as well. If I have made it clear that the conditions laid down in the application of the association could not be met, all I meant to convey by my statement that has been quoted was that even if those conditions could not be met it might be possible that we could find other conditions whereby we could meet the request of the potato association to some extent, and they might have to yield a little with respect to their request if they would. Up

to the present time we have not gone further than that and I am free to confess that, for rather obvious reasons, I have not had the time to do so in recent weeks.

Mr. Green: Does the minister mean that he can take no action to help these people unless it is done in collaboration with the United States? Are there not some other steps that could be taken, perhaps by way of assisting them to get into the market in Quebec and Ontario from the maritimes, for example? Just what does the minister have in mind? It sounds as though the only possible help that can be given is by persuading the Americans not to raise their tariff if we raise ours, although theirs is already higher than ours. Is that what the minister means?

Mr. Harris: That is what the potato association requested that we do; that we take action to change the Canadian tariff, and that cannot be done except by agreement with the United States. There is a treaty, and if we desire to have it changed the procedure is to express that desire. Then there is, no doubt, a counter suggestion from the other side, because there must be some form of compensation paid to obtain the benefits you desire.

So far as providing freight assistance is concerned, if that is what my hon. friend had in mind, I have not come prepared to discuss that because my understanding is that the potato report rather indicated that while that was a matter of some moment for the maritime producers in the Montreal and perhaps the Toronto markets, nevertheless there were local markets for local production, and that except in some instances assistance with respect to freight rates would not be a particularly attractive feature. I may be wrong and may have to qualify that because I have not read the report for some months, but I believe that was the general tenor of the remarks on freight rate assistance. Therefore I did not have that in mind when I made the vague remark I did.

Mr. Green: Does the minister mean to say that the period of six weeks, during which the Canadian tariff of 37½ per cent applies, cannot be extended at all without the consent of the United States?

Mr. Harris: No, I did not mean to say that. What I mean to say is that with a friendly neighbour, with whom both ways we have the largest trade in the world, and with a treaty in existence, we do not change tariffs without consulting them and seeing if we can come to a mutually acceptable settlement.