

### Supply

We are headed for more GATT negotiations in the year 2000. Under the present tariff levels there is good protection for supply-managed farmers. We are going to see a rapid reduction in tariffs resulting from the new negotiations in GATT around the year 2000. As a result of these negotiations there will be far more open access to Canadian markets on the part of American dairy farmers and other supply-managed farmers.

However, there is a more pressing negotiation that is going to take place, which will lead the supply-managed sector to more competition. That is the new NAFTA negotiations. Bill Clinton and Jean Chrétien announced that within four years Chile will be in NAFTA. That means new NAFTA negotiations within four years.

I would like to ask the members of the Bloc if they feel there is a realistic probability, better than a 50 per cent probability, that these new NAFTA negotiations will not include more access to the Canadian market for American supply-managed farmers. I believe the answer is no. There will definitely be more access to the Canadian market by American supply-managed farmers.

I do not believe the Americans will sign a new NAFTA deal that will allow Chile into this NAFTA group unless they are given more access to Canadian markets. I am not saying this is what I want to see; I am saying this is what I believe will happen. There is an extremely high probability that this will happen.

Any politician who pretends this is not going to happen is really depriving the farmers involved of transition time that they desperately need to deal with this very difficult situation. It is indeed going to be very difficult for supply-managed farmers.

Instead of taking a day in this House to debate the relative unfairness of the cuts between east and west, between Quebec and the rest of Canada, it would be far more productive to spend our time talking about how we can help, if we can help at all, supply-managed farmers to move to a competitive market system. It is an issue that is too important for us to ignore in the House.

In the future I look forward to the Bloc using an opposition day to deal with this subject. I believe it would be of far more value to Quebec dairy farmers and other supply-managed farmers in Quebec than this type of motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's speech, who wishes that, the next time, the Bloc will table an opposition motion on other aspects of agriculture. In the last year, the Bloc Québécois raised the issue of agriculture on two different opposition days. If the Reform Party wishes to do so, it can use its opposition days to debate this issue.

We can probably agree on one point, I think. The 1995-96 estimates provide for the elimination of 429 jobs in the research and development sector of the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food. The department's staff will go down from 3,454 to 3,015.

• (1135)

We know that jobs in the research and development sector help build the future, but they are also career development jobs held by people with university degrees, technical training or some other more practical training, and these people help their industry develop and prepare for the future.

I wonder if the Reform member shares my view, which is also that of the Canadian Sheep Federation. The federation feels that the federal government is abandoning, without justification, a production in full development. Indeed, this government decided to pull the rug out from under sheep producers by completely withdrawing from the R and D sector of the sheep raising industry. Consequently, that industry, which must face market globalization and international competition, finds itself without any support regarding the development and the improvement of its products.

Does the Reform member feel that such penny-pinching on the part of the Department of Agriculture is a good solution? Would it not be wiser to maintain R and D support at its current level, or at least delegate that responsibility to Quebec and the other provinces, so that they can develop their agriculture? Why would the federal government withdraw from a whole sector of agricultural production after supporting it for years? Is this not an unacceptable decision? Is the Bloc not right in raising this issue in the House?

[English]

**Mr. Benoit:** Mr. Speaker, I also received the memo from the sheep producers, who expressed their concern about the cuts in research funding to their industry. I received the letter yesterday and I look forward to talking with the sheep producers to see exactly what will happen to research in that area.

With respect to the hon. member's comment that these petty cuts are not acceptable, there is an overriding concern resulting from the budget that requires that cuts be made. Most farmers I have talked with have recognized, reluctantly, that the cuts to their industry, while unfair, are absolutely necessary in order to deal with the severe fiscal problem we have. Again, I say they are unfair because they were not balanced between cuts directly to farmers and cuts to the department, and they were not balanced across the country.

The biggest concern of farmers is that the cuts did not go far enough. There is no definite target for the deficit being eliminated. I would like to address the impact of that on farmers. When the member spoke of petty cuts, I became very concerned because these cuts were needed, and more cuts are needed.