

Customs Tariff

year of the Liberal regime, a tax was placed on the chassis of a fertilizing machine. Someone in that Department came to the conclusion that the chassis of a fertilizer was the same as a chassis of a truck. The chassis for the fertilizer I am thinking about is made specifically for fertilizing fields. In no way can it be used for a truck. Yet that tax was added and thereby increased the cost of production of food. I firmly believe that we should make sure that machinery coming into this country, including manure spreaders, which assists in the production of foods should come in duty-free. We should not be adding costs to the production of food. That is a very sound principle and I hope it permeates this legislation.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the point my hon. friend raises is an interesting one. I know he is only too well aware of the technological advances Canada has provided to the world agricultural community over the years. This is a very important aspect of the economy of the riding he represents and he is well aware of the development of agricultural equipment over the years.

My concern, and I am sure that he shares it, is that too many of the discussions we have in this House regarding agriculture or our general tariff policy, by definition implies a comprehensive understanding of what we are trying to achieve over the long term. That requires an understanding between the major players of Government, industry, labour and others. We have to understand what we are trying to accomplish together. Our customs and excise programs should reflect that over-all strategy or game plan. However, over the years there has not been a long-term view taken. For years and years I blamed the then Liberal Government for not taking the time to develop a consensus so we could understand the direction we were moving in, in whatever area. Therefore I must reflect with some sorrow on a similar feeling today. So much faith in the "market-place" implies by definition a short-term view of economic development as well as societal development. The concern I want to share with the Hon. Member is that of this rather blind acceptance of the "market system" as the motivating and most important force. One of the reasons not only social democratic countries but countries like Japan are successful while we seem to flounder around rather like a rudderless ship in a sea without any long-term comprehensive program to help guide us is because they have long-term economic development planning.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has made a study of this matter. He reported to caucus on this matter two years ago, if I recall correctly. I am particularly concerned about one matter which has an immediate effect in British Columbia and which will have certain repercussions if it is passed without adequate consideration. I am referring to Schedule 1, and in particular Tariff Item 41014-1. He knows, as do I, that this particular item is of grave concern in much of his riding, and certainly to the north in Revelstoke and areas—

Mr. Riis: East and north.

Mr. Deans: —to the east and north. I would very much appreciate if he could perhaps give us some insight regarding whether or not any negotiations or discussions took place prior to the introduction of this legislation with those people in that area of British Columbia who will be most affected.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, indeed, as my colleague indicated, we took some time over this issue in caucus about 18 months or two years ago. This item was the focus of our attention. To my knowledge no comprehensive discussion has taken place regarding the implications of this decision. In more common parlance, my hon. friend was referring equipment used in coalmining. We have developed some sophisticated technology over the years and we are presently world leaders in some of the more critical cutting devices used at the coal face. Here again we are suggesting that tariffs not be applied to not only coal-cutting machines but loading machines, draglines, power shovels, hydraulic excavating backhoes, front end loaders, front wheel graders and the like. This goes back to the original point that both my colleague from Regina and I were making, that if Canada is going to develop a manufacturing sector which reflects its strengths and resource advantage areas, coal-mining is certainly one of those. This is particularly true when you consider the high grade coal which so much of western Canada is blessed with and what that means in combating acid rain. The sulphur content of that coal is relatively low compared to most global coal deposits. We were concerned about Schedule 1, Tariff Item 41014-1 as being another example of the lack of thought the Government has given to providing duty-free importation of this equipment which has become so valuable in the development of a Canadian resource.

An equal concern arises when we come to deal with popguns and .22 rifles and so on, and the differentiation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order. I regret that the period for questions and comments is now over. Resuming debate.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I was a little worried that I might not get an opportunity to speak this afternoon, and I am certainly pleased to do so. If I may, I want to go back to the comment I made and the question I asked of my colleague because I think it exemplifies or highlights, if you will, the problem in dealing with legislation of this type. It is of course very complex. Its implications are frequently not felt until long after it has been put in place. The other night, just before I dropped off to sleep, I was looking through the Bill to determine just exactly where the Government was moving to reduce tariffs. If you had the opportunity to read the Bill, Mr. Speaker, I know you will want to express some concerns and I will therefore take this opportunity to express them on your behalf.

● (1630)

For example, for those of my colleagues who have not yet read the Bill, look at tariff Item 41002-1. I cannot think of a nation that should have more interest and concern in protect-