

In the Township of Charlettville in my riding there are a large number of vegetable producers, with the main crops being tomatoes, cucumbers, and the like, and all are concerned about how the trade deal will affect their operations. Many are concerned that the commitment in the Free Trade Agreement to phase out seasonal tariffs will eventually lead to the demise of the vegetable producing sector in this country.

There are some 27,000 farmers employed in horticulture in Canada, and processors of horticultural commodities employ another 24,000 full and part-time workers. We are talking about a large number of jobs and the effect that the loss of such jobs could have on employment levels generally.

With our shorter growing season, we produce very much less in the way of fruit and vegetables than is produced in the U.S. U.S. growers, under the Free Trade Agreement, will be able to sell their products into Canada. Granted, there are provisions in the agreement to minimize the effect on Canadian fruit and vegetable growers, though I do not think they will help the farmers in my community.

It is difficult for Canadian fruit and vegetable growers to compete with the American growers given the much lower cost of production in the U.S.

Archie McLean of McCain Foods Ltd.—and I do not know what his political persuasion is—has come out and said that well over 100,000 jobs in the agri-food sector could be lost as a result of this deal. That is scary.

The elimination of tariffs in this sector will, I believe, lead directly to lower returns for Canadian farmers, brought about by increased competition from American growers and producers. The only protection would be in the snap-back provisions. In order to reactivate duties for a temporary period, the formula is a complex one, and especially so in respect of fruit and vegetables.

Let me review the formula for Hon. Members, in an effort to help them understand just how complex it is. The snap-back provisions can only be activated if prices fall more than 10 per cent below the weighted five-year average for the month in question for a specific commodity for a period of five consecutive days, and our own acreage in that commodity has not increased over its five-year average.

A temporary duty can be imposed in respect of each commodity only once in a 12-month period and must be removed as soon as the price climbs.

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

As can be seen, it is no easy task to reintroduce duties in respect of these commodities and is not something that I think will work. In fact, it seems to me that the cost of the monitoring imports, prices, and domestic acreage with sufficient accuracy and speed, would be such that the time, effort and money would be better spent elsewhere in the agricultural industry, perhaps in agricultural research or in reducing farm debt.

The Liberal Party has proposed amendments which we feel would go a long way toward minimizing the adverse effects of the Free Trade Agreement. By way of example, one amendment would establish a government board which would review annually the impact of the elimination of the tariffs on fruit and vegetables, as well as the impact of the special provisions for fresh fruit and vegetables under Article 702 and on the food processing and horticultural industry. It would also give the Government of Canada the right to impose a temporary duty on fresh fruit and vegetables when advised by the board that a horticultural or food processing sector is in jeopardy.

We tried to have this amendment and others considered, but the Government would not accept them. For that reason, I should like to take a moment to read the amendment we had in mind. It is as follows:

That Bill C-2 be amended by adding thereto, immediately after line 7 on page 4 thereof, the following clause:

"8. (1) There is hereby established an inquiry board composed of three members appointed by the Minister and representing the Canadian horticultural and food processing industry.

(2) The Board shall review annually the implementation of Article 702 of the Agreement and the impact of such implementation on the Canadian horticultural and food processing industry.

(3) Upon the finding that the Canadian horticultural and food processing industry is adversely affected by Article 702, the Board may, with the assent of the Minister, recommend that specific measures be taken pursuant to Section 59 of the Customs Tariff in order to correct such adverse effects."

This amendment would establish a board to review Article 702 of the agreement and, as such, minimize the adverse effects that it may have.

The Government has refused this amendment; it has refused to even consider it, and it will have to suffer the consequences.

I should like to talk for a moment about Article 706 of the agreement, the effect of which is to increase the global import quota for poultry product coming into Canada.

I have a large number of chicken and turkey producers in my riding, and in fact the whole range of the