

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, Liberal (Winnipeg—Fort Garry)

“Of course, we know we have to continue talking, discussing and negotiating.”

The reason we raised in our amendment the kinds of very clear conditions we did is that Canadians are equally afraid of what the Government has done. They know full well, whether they are farmers in southwestern Ontario or in the interior of British Columbia that they are at risk when it comes to negotiating the supply systems and the export and import controls. The Minister says: “I am going to bring down tariffs”. Does that mean the Government is going to negotiate the seasonal tariffs? Does it mean the Minister is going to put the farmers in Ontario and British Columbia, the farmers in the Fraser Valley and large parts of southern Ontario and New Brunswick out of business? That is the implication of her remarks. That is the clear message she is giving. That is what she is negotiating away if she is going to reduce those tariffs. Our Party kept them in there because we recognize the need to protect those industries.

What is it that the Government is trying to negotiate? The Minister began to give her own little shopping list, and that really begins to telegraph clearly why this debate should have happened much earlier. It should have happened at the time the report of the joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons indicated that there

should be a debate in the House of Commons first before we get into negotiation. The former chairman is here and will know that I certainly supported that recommendation. The fact is that what really is at stake is that level playing field about which the Americans like to talk. It is the idea that we are going to negotiate away our right to choose for ourselves what subsidies or programs we will be able to apply domestically to support our own industries. The Minister has conceded that this is on the table. She has said that we are going to negotiate subsidies, services and investment. We now that the Government is engaged at the present time in negotiating away the kind of independence Canada will require in order to initiate and control its own economic formula.

I would say to the Conservatives opposite that if they want to provide confidence that in fact they will not negotiate away those rights, because they say that somehow we are putting up a screen, then they have one very clear way of proving it. They can vote for our amendment. They can give us right now in this House all the assurance and guarantees which Canadians need, but I do not think they are going to do it. They will not give those assurances because that is what they are negotiating away.