

Supply

themselves. If other marketing agencies were ever to be created in other sectors . . . and there is a feasibility study being conducted currently on a possible marketing agency for potatoe producers. We will realize once we get that report and give it due consideration that this Government by no means intends to give up its responsibilities in this area. And if there is a demand for a marketing board for hogs, for instance, the Government will then proceed. Nothing in this Accord prevents us from taking such an action. We will let the Canadian agricultural producers decide what kind of agriculture they want. These are the terms of this agreement: Canadian agriculture is not tied up. It's up to us to preserve the systems that make up the very basis of our agriculture.

Another concern expressed in the motion is that Canadian fruit and vegetable producers would suffer from reduced growth of their industry. I have to point out, Madam Speaker, that on the contrary some products from the horticultural sector could greatly benefit from increased export opportunities, particularly to the northeastern United States. This could be the case with potatoes, cabbage, carrots and onions. I have already met personally with people in the fruit and vegetable sector, and they are much aware of that. Given the importance of that sector in Canada, special provisions have been negotiated. Present tariffs will be gradually eliminated, as in other sectors, over a 10 year period.

However, over a period of twenty years, both countries will have the right to temporarily restore present tariffs if export prices fall to abnormal levels. In other words, if an increase in fresh fruit and vegetable imports from the U.S. drives down Canadian prices, we will be able to re-establish our seasonal tariffs. This a safeguard that we have. We understand that our climate creates difficulties. We are fully aware of this fact. But we also understand that this sector should be dynamic on its own. Over the years, Madam Speaker, Canadian agricultural producers have always adjusted to market pressures both at home and internationally. During the past few years, the federal Government has constantly done everything so Canadian producers could get the kind of system they want in Canada. We saw this, for instance, when a tripartite stabilization system was introduced. Discussions had been going on for ten or fifteen years in this country.

Our Government managed to get a consensus, with patience and through consultation, not with the kind of unbending and unilateral approach we had seen for twenty years before that. Not that way. Our Government consults. Our Government acknowledges the regional differences in this country. Our Government realizes that people have the right to speak and express their opinions.

In fact, Madam Speaker, the Agreement does not prevent Canada from continuing to prohibit consignment imports and monitoring shipments of goods in non-standardized bulk containers on international and interprovincial markets.

Furthermore, the assertion that red meat producers benefit very little under the Agreement is surprising, to say the least.

The Hon. Member for Essex—Kent said as much a while ago. One would have to be blind not to see the obvious advantage to us of opening up our markets in the red meat industry. Is it because they don't understand the new mechanisms that have been introduced? I don't know to what extent they understand our testing system, but I think it seems pretty straightforward.

• (1650)

The Canadian red meat industry, whose main market is the United States, will benefit from the elimination of tariffs. Both countries have also agreed to exempt each other from restrictions on cattle imports. The advantages of a North American market in this sector are obvious. In the beef sector, Canadian beef producers will benefit from the exemption granted to Canada under the provisions of the U.S. Meat Import Law. Since the United States is by far the most important market for Canadian beef—our exports totalled about \$400 million in 1986 alone—we had to obtain more secure access to this market. This is a very important part of the Agreement for Canada, and especially for Western Canada. We all know, and we saw this again today, what a poor opinion the Opposition has of the people in Western Canada. However, this Government recognizes the distinctiveness of all our regions and their contribution to this country. That is the difference. That is why this Government is a truly national Government. And we will continue to make it so.

And now, what about Canadian hog producers? Our exports of hogs, pork and pork products are worth \$630 million. If we add beef as well, we get a total of over \$1 billion. Need I remind Hon. Members of the recent disruption caused by several American states when they wrongfully resorted to technicalities to set up trade barriers? Remember chloramphenicol! I think the present attitude in our negotiations is such that we should be able to avoid further non-tariff barriers.

Madam Speaker, it would be to the net advantage of the Canadian red meat sector to have freer and more extensive access to a market of 235 million consumers. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Canadian Pork Council and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture have had some very positive things to say in this respect. I think that a quick look at the agreement concluded in the agricultural sector will show that we have kept our word.

An Hon. Member: Certainly not!

Mr. Blais: We have always said, and last week the president of the *Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec*, who has been in the industry for a long time, told me that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) had met his commitments. He always promised to maintain our marketing boards, while making it clear that agriculture was being discussed at the negotiating table. When we know that as part of the negotiations, a sub-committee on agriculture was meeting to discuss agricultural issues, I don't know by what stretch of the