

### *Customs Tariff*

proposed average rate during the dutiable period is 12.1 per cent. For the year as a whole the weighted average under existing arrangements is estimated at 5.2 per cent, and for the year as a whole at 5.5 per cent, a slight increase.

The corresponding figures—I will take only the year as a whole—for fresh fruits are, under the existing schedule, 1.9 per cent, and under the proposed average rate 1.5 per cent; and for processed fruits and vegetables, 9.3 per cent existing and 11 per cent proposed. Over all, for all categories, the estimate under the existing average rate is 5.4 per cent, rising to 6.1 per cent for the year as a whole. I can give comparable figures for each item, but I thought those average figures might be of some help in getting a perspective on what is proposed.

● (1520)

**Mr. Peters:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his comments on averaging because I certainly do not want to ask about each specific category. Taking asparagus as an example, I gather from his explanation that it will now be numbered 2701-1 instead of 8702-2. That is not to put asparagus in a different category, but probably to put it in the new tariff with the restricted period, and it has been raised from 3.5 cents to 9.6. I suppose 3.5 cents was 9.6 per cent and the proposed rate is 12.1 per cent. I presume this means that when the Canadian Horticultural Society and the Department of Agriculture have triggered the designated period, the duty will be considerably higher thereafter. I presume that it would amount to approximately three-quarters of one per cent, taking the difference between 5.4 per cent and 6.1 per cent. It may not be possible to use the average figure on anything except the specified commodity, but it is probably within that range.

I am not satisfied that the triggering mechanism is sufficient to meet the needs of producers. The agriculture department has always been plagued by the argument, which we have heard from the Bing cherry, grape and soft fruit producers and from the horticultural industry, that the date of applying the tariff may not always be the same and that when it is decided that the tariff should be applied it is not applied quickly enough. By the time the matter has been discussed by the Department of Agriculture and the horticultural society, it is too late. It has always been suggested that the Department of Agriculture have a much closer relationship with the tariff board so that the tariff can be triggered to meet the climatic conditions of the day or the conditions which govern the season of that particular product. This complaint has been brought up by all the agencies which I have mentioned.

The strawberry industry in southern Ontario has been plagued because of this indecision to the extent that most of the strawberries are plowed under. Most of our fresh strawberries come from outside Canada. Obviously the duty has not been triggered at the proper time.

Referring to my example of asparagus, is this eight-week period long enough? I do not know much about growing asparagus. I planted some at one time and some of it is still coming up, but it certainly is not a commercial crop. I am

[Mr. Ritchie (York East).]

wondering if the eight-week period is sufficient protection for our producers and whether or not it takes into consideration the varying conditions between the Holland Marsh and the Niagara Peninsula. If eight weeks is enough, the horticultural society will be hard pressed to make all the decisions on the various crops and to get the eight-week period in the proper place for such places as the Holland Marsh, the Bruce Peninsula, Niagara Falls—

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Vancouver Island.

**Mr. Peters:** I did not know that asparagus was grown there, but certainly the climate is right. If it is not planted as deeply as I plant mine and fertilized better, it will probably grow there.

**Mr. Beatty:** There is lots of fertilizer.

**Mr. Peters:** If fertilizer is needed, we should use the hot air from this building and it would probably grow very well. I know that these time periods are switched around, that there are many periods and that they keep playing with them. I know that these periods do not meet the requirements of the Department of Agriculture but do they meet the requirements of the horticultural society? If they do, how is it that we are faced with the problem of losing certain commodities? Should we lengthen the time that the duty is applied? Would it be wise for me to wait and make my wine later when I can get grapes from California, or wait for the period in which the higher tariff is invoked and make my wine when I can get grapes from the Niagara Peninsula?

There have been presentations by the horticultural society and by individuals in the various industries. All these people say that the duty structure does not work to their advantage, that it is not applied soon enough or at the correct times. Yet a former minister has indicated that the horticultural society was satisfied with the duty structure.

I do not wish to go through all the commodities. Perhaps asparagus is a good example because it is used by both of us.

**An hon. Member:** Raspberries.

**Mr. Peters:** Raspberries come under a different category, and I have not heard that the raspberry producers suffer the same problems. Are we solving the problem by increasing the tariff by such a small amount? I suppose we could go through each commodity. Asparagus is not the example which I would have picked.

Another commodity which we do not seem to be able to produce is lettuce. Tomatoes are certainly a good example as well. Perhaps we should have an explanation as to the effect of this duty because we buy most of our produce outside of Canada and our own produce comes on stream at a specific time. Obviously, if the tariff structure is being designed to protect our producers, then it is not working because we have lost many commodities.

● (1530)

I took the yearly average for asparagus as 5.7 but the average over all was 5.4 to 6.1 That is a relatively small