

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Canada have had to suffer through two consecutive years of depressed prices. This is not a healthy situation for any industry. Last year it could have been argued that the low price was due to over-production on the part of the producers themselves. I believe the minister suggested this last year. His advice was heeded by the growers and aided perhaps by nature. The fact is that potato production is down considerably in Canada this year, but despite this reduction the over-all prices remain depressed. They remain depressed because of the huge surplus south of the line which, as I said, is acting as a depressant on Canadian potato prices.

There is much more in the way of fact and figures which I should like to place on the record, but this is not necessary in view of the fact that the minister was in receipt of the brief and the application of the Western Canadian Potato Growers Association. They show a formula which under the provisions of section 40(7)(b) of the Customs Act could mean that the minister could take action to place a value for duty on American potatoes at a level of approximately \$2.75. If this were done I am sure Canadian producers would be satisfied. By doing this the minister would be doing nothing more than what is provided for under the law. The law is there and I should like to know why the minister does not avail himself of it.

Mr. Bruce S. Beer (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I should like to express the appreciation of the minister and my own personal appreciation to the hon. member for Springfield (Mr. Schreyer) for the very responsible way in which he has presented his question. I am pleased tonight that I have a rather straight-forward answer for him, which I am sure he will find helpful, if not as encouraging as it might be.

Early in February the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) and the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Chrétien) met with representatives of the British Columbia interior vegetable marketing board, the British Columbia coast vegetable marketing board, the Alberta potato commission and the Manitoba vegetable marketing commission at which time they requested that the government impose a minimum value for duty on potatoes imported into western Canada under section 40A(7) of the Customs Act. They indicated that their application had the support of potato growers organizations in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia. However they

indicated that concurrence in their application was refused by officials of the growers, shippers and processors associations of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Following these representations the government set up an interdepartmental committee to consider the application. A review of the situation by this committee indicated that a minimum value for duty on potatoes imported from the United States was not appropriate under conditions existing at that time. In reaching this conclusion the major factors that were considered were:

1. The relative volumes moving from the United States into Canada;
2. The importance of the trade in potatoes between Canada and the United States;
3. The lack of unanimity and the opposition to the imposition of value for duty on potatoes by other growers across Canada;
4. Our obligations under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade;
5. The fact that the United States was at that time instituting a potato diversion program aimed at strengthening their market.

Since then the matter has been kept under continuous review by departmental officials and has been considered from time to time at the ministerial level. In the meantime prices in the United States have firmed and this has been reflected in prices in western Canada. The situation, however, is being kept under review.

COMPANY OF YOUNG CANADIANS—REPORTED
SUBSIDIZATION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS
IN B.C.

Mr. Howard Johnston (Okanagan-Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, my question arises out of a program which appeared on television yesterday, "Through The Eyes of Tomorrow", which dealt with three private schools in the Vancouver area, the New School, the Barker School and the Knowplace School. At no time during the course of the program was any mention made that two of these schools, the Barker School and the Knowplace School, are being subsidized by the federal government through the Company of Young Canadians.

This was a rather surprising oversight because we know that the Company of Young Canadians recently hired a public relations officer whose job it is to see that this organization obtains wide coverage for its activities.