

Customs Tariff

to force legislation through not allowing the President of the United States the power of veto. Congressmen to whom I spoke feel that they have more than a two-thirds majority supporting them in Congress. Consequently, they feel quite secure that their protectionist direction is going to be upheld.

With protectionism rampant in the United States, Mr. Speaker, why are we eliminating the small protection that we have? Free trade seems to be a favourite topic among Cabinet Ministers at this time. It is a whole new area of concern and we do not know what the effects of free trade would be. It is all very well to say that we will get certain products cheaper if we have free trade, but it may also mean that those products will no longer be made in Canada. We do not know what the trade missions to Canada mean when they say that all they want is a level playing field. We have no idea what is meant by a level playing field in terms used by the United States. Does it mean that our relations with other countries with which we trade now, other than the United States, will be the same as those that other countries have with the United States? Are we going to find ourselves operating under the same kind of restrictions which the States presently operate on in its relations with many countries? Is that what is called a level playing field? Will we have the same access to markets that are presently our markets now, or will that access disappear?

● (1530)

In passing Bills like Bill C-71, we are going along a route that is not necessarily the route we will have to look at tomorrow. Why give away what we have before we know what the future is going to do for us? Let us slow down the process of changing tariffs until we know what the new rules are going to be. If we give away what little leverage we have, we will find ourselves without any weapons or any basis to say to any country that we want to keep Canadian industry going. Let us not give away the leverage we have by casually passing every customs tariff change that is brought forward by this Government.

I recognize that customs tariff changes were part of negotiations that we got into long before the present Government came into power. They were part of a direction decided many years ago, but decided when the rules were known, not decided under the circumstances we now find ourselves.

We keep being told that what we need is a level playing field. I am from a heavily agricultural area. I want to know before we start negotiating away our present tariffs that that level playing field will not negate our agricultural boards; for instance, the dairy commission, the poultry commission, and the Canadian Wheat Board. Those boards are very important to the continued stability of the agricultural industry across Canada. Will those boards disappear because the U.S. will demand a level playing field?

What do we know about the negotiations? What about things like stabilization for farmers and crop insurance, elements that are very important to the stable and continued development or even continued production in many farm areas? If you do not have stabilization and insurance, more

farmers will go bankrupt than are going bankrupt now. If those things are not in place, many parts of our industry will disappear. Before we go ahead with casually passing Bills that will change the rules or the protection we have, let us be sure we know the rules we will be playing under next month or next year.

Although this Bill does not affect us a great deal, I think we should be careful about it. I expect this Bill will be passed, but nevertheless we should be very careful in our understanding of the rules by which we play. We should be very careful that the direction we are going is one that we control. Instead of tearing down the protection we have, we should be looking at areas where fair and free trade are taken into consideration, where we can protect ourselves from the large colossus to the south.

I wonder what a level playing field will be. A U.S. team is made up of 10 players. Canada's team is made up of one player. The U.S. is 10 times as large as Canada. Granted, if you kick the ball you have 10 places to kick it; but you only have one if you are in Canada. The whole process of free trade must be looked at very carefully within the bounds of what we have to keep us operating as we are now.

I just wanted to put those points on the record. When we start talking about trade, let us be sure we know the rules under which we will operate in the future.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I have one or two comments. I hardly know what the Hon. Member means when he says "Let's keep what we have and let's not give anything away". At the present time a number of my constituents are having difficulty. There is some rule that states a person must go to the customs office himself or have a broker go to pick up a parcel. One professional living in Strathmore has to hire a broker at \$40 an hour, because he could not leave his practice, to pick up what was a \$25 parcel. If that is keeping what we have, I do not go for that at all. The Minister is looking at such things and he should be able to change them.

Second, the Hon. Member has mentioned "giving away" several times. I do not know what he means by "giving away". If this is now going to eliminate the custom's charge that has been placed on the chassis of a fertilizer machine, we are not giving anything away. We are simply making it more reasonable for our farmers to operate. The Hon. Member coming from an agricultural area surely knows that farmers cannot pass on those costs. They have to absorb them, adding to the cost of producing food.

I think the Minister is very wise to bring in these measures. Many of the articles that I see in this Bill are protecting items made in Canada. We are not discussing free trade here at the present time. We are discussing the situation as it is. Certainly I do not agree with everything the way it is right now, but a lot of these changes are very good. Some of the changes will help people to get work. Doing away with customs charges on cutting machines for coal mines, for instance. These are very expensive machines not made in Canada. They come in from other countries. By eliminating that duty, that may enable