

Supply—Trade and Commerce

upon those who had participated in the debate and had not introduced anything in the way of a narrow political nature into their discussion.

I thought I would not have to mention anything of that kind when the hon. member took his seat, but letting my memory drift back over the discussion that has taken place up to this point I find it somewhat difficult to remember anything that was said which was more politically narrow than the suggestion made by the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton to the effect that in the 22 years the Liberals were in office they had not produced even a one point program. That seems to me the essence of narrow political comment, and I am only going to leave it with hon. members of the committee to determine how correct it is.

I do wish, however, to join the hon. member in commenting upon the appointment of the Minister of Trade and Commerce. The appointment of the present minister fulfils a long-desired hope on the part of those who live in the prairie provinces. I thought we were never going to be favoured with the appointment of a minister of trade and commerce from the prairie provinces. In my time we have had ministers holding this portfolio come from every other part of Canada including British Columbia, but I do not recall one from the prairies. I want to not only congratulate the minister on his appointment but the prairies in having provided a minister of trade and commerce, because there are so many matters which come under that department that concern the people of the prairie region.

I sometimes had the feeling that because of the many things which come under the Department of Trade and Commerce it was going to be difficult to have a man from the prairie area appointed to the position, but now that we have one there are many people in western Canada who have high hopes about what will be accomplished through his performance while he is in office. I am not going to say anything today in discussing the questions which are before the committee which would be other than of some assistance to the minister in bringing about a condition that will be helpful to Canada, now that we have a minister from the prairie section in this post. I want sincerely to congratulate him on having been chosen Minister of Trade and Commerce.

The questions which have been up for discussion have raised a number of thoughts in my mind, the first one being the high level discussion between representatives of the government of the United States and representatives of the government of Canada. I recall the first such discussion which took

place during the time we were in the government, and that it was suggested by the agricultural representative in Ottawa from the United States. We were discussing at that time matters which are very much in the mind of the last speaker, the hon. member for Victoria-Carleton, namely the shipment of potatoes into the United States. The chief discussion going on in the Senate in Washington was the importation of many potatoes which entered into competition with the production of United States' farmers.

Mr. Macdonnell: Will the hon. gentleman permit a question? Did I correctly understand him to say that the first negotiations between Canada and the United States on this question took place during the regime of the last government; nothing before that?

Mr. Gardiner: If I gave that impression it would be wrong, and I think that is the suggestion my hon. friend wishes to make.

Mr. Macdonnell: No, please.

Mr. Gardiner: I was not saying that, no.

Mr. Macdonnell: Please; I was asking purely as a matter of interest. I am ignorant of the matter myself and I wanted to know.

Mr. Gardiner: What I was saying was that these high level meetings between a committee of four members of the Canadian government and four members of the United States government had their origin in a discussion with regard to the potato question, and it was brought up by the agricultural representative from Washington who was stationed in Ottawa. He made the suggestion that we should have the secretary of agriculture of the United States come to Ottawa and discuss the question of potatoes with us.

Well, he came, and the minister of trade and commerce of that time and I met him. He was astonished to find the quantity of potatoes which were being shipped from the United States into this country. He did not really realize there was any such thing going on. I need only refer to the fact that it was only a short time ago that many more potatoes were coming into this country from the United States than were going from this country to the United States. At that time it was not quite in that position, but when the secretary of agriculture came here he asked us to send him back to Washington all the figures with regard to the matter, and he said, "I can assure you that when these facts are made known to the senators in the United States there will be little further discussion along that line". A result following his ideas was obtained at that time.