

• (1920)

The speech from the throne starts to build on some of our opportunities. Indeed there are many challenges before us as well. In the three months since the election the government has to a great extent been keeping its commitments. Last week in my province there was the announcement of a \$36 million infrastructure program. It will develop critical infrastructure work and create direct and indirect jobs. Also the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has indicated that he will be providing assistance to fishermen who are having great difficulty as a result of the cod crisis.

I recognize that we do, though, face enormous challenges that have been left with us as a result of the last nine years. I recognize the government has entered into NAFTA and GATT. I share the concerns of many Canadians about both these agreements. I worry that in these agreements there is a considerable loss of sovereignty. Will we really have the right to govern or will we just be administrators of the various trade agreements? The Prime Minister has spoken to this somewhat. He has given his commitment and the commitment of the Canadian government to ensure that these trade agreements work in the interests of Canadians. That is our objective and that is our commitment.

I take exception to the comment of a Bloc Québécois member who spoke two speakers ago. I repeat what he said. He said that the minister of agriculture was negotiating to eliminate the tariffs. That statement is wrong. The minister of agriculture is negotiating in the interests of our dairy farmers to keep the tariff levels high so that we can enhance and protect the supply management system. The government is committed to agriculture. It is committed to the supply management system. It is committed to the Canadian Wheat Board. This government offers hope for the future.

In conclusion, we are faced with a challenge to take charge in these difficult times and institute our agenda as outlined in the red book. The throne speech and the progress made to date are good starts. I emphasize again the point that by giving power to MPs, as we have indicated in the throne speech, we bring democracy back to the country, give everyone their input and certainly work in the interests of people.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Essex—Kent): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to my colleague who just finished a very excellent presentation. Certainly he tried to clarify the major concerns we hear about the GATT negotiations the minister has successfully worked on for the Canadian farm community.

What are my colleague's thoughts with regard to the difficult job the minister inherited coming into the GATT discussions, putting in tariff barriers and making sure that much of the

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agriculture production under supply management has a fair amount of protection? Does he feel that our supply management system will be pretty stable and in a very positive direction?

That is a question many people in agriculture have asked. Certainly the minister has responded in favourable ways. What are my colleague's thoughts in that area?

• (1925)

Mr. Easter: Mr. Speaker, certainly in terms of the GATT negotiations the retaining and the strengthening of article XI(ii)(c) was the preferred direction of the government. It ended up that it was not in the cards. What we tried to achieve at that time was the tariffication approach and to establish very high tariffs to protect our supply management industry.

The agreement does not come into place until July or August 1995. That gives us some time in order to meet with the supply management groups and other groups and to set up the system in such a way that we can have a growing and prosperous industry in the future. The supply management system in Canada, I believe and we believe as a government, is a model for the world. It provides a high quality product at reasonable prices to consumers and is a great food security policy.

The minister of agriculture is very committed in his discussions with the secretary of agriculture of the United States to trying to achieve the objectives we set out during the election of protecting and enhancing the supply management system.

It is a difficult job. We were left with negotiations when so much had been given away by the previous administration. It is a very difficult negotiation, but I believe the minister of agriculture will prevail and the supply management system will indeed survive.

[Translation]

Mr. Philippe Paré (Louis-Hébert): Mr. Speaker, just a brief comment, because I did not understand. The member referred to Mr. Marchand saying the Minister of Agriculture was negotiating the abolition of tariffs. I do not think the member for Québec—Est, critic for the Official Opposition, said that. According to me, what he said was the Minister of Agriculture is now negotiating with the United States and the negotiations deal with the abolition of tariffs. If one country is trying to do away with tariffs, it is certainly not Canada, it is the United States. Still, Canada has to face that first problem, merely five weeks after the signing of the GATT agreements.

[English]

Mr. Easter: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the last part of the questioner's comments. The record certainly will show what was said. What I copied down was that the minister was being accused of negotiations to eliminate the tariffs.