

Customs Tariff

were not able to manufacture the extra quantities required. Both Anchor Cap and Bernardin shipped lids to western Canada last year, but not in the quantities required. They are also shipping some there this year. However, a shortage has developed right across Canada because they are not manufacturing enough lids to pick up the slack.

Over a year ago I pleaded with the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce to do something about this situation. What happened? The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) in an answer to my question says that a strike at a plant in British Columbia is the reason for the shortage. There is not a manufacturer of snap-on lids in western Canada. There is a manufacturer of jars, but it is not the jars that are in short supply. It is the lids. These are the kinds of answers and these are the kind of things we are being told, and you know from the answers that ministers do not know, they do not understand. We hope they do care about the situation, because with the higher cost of food today housewives are turning back to canning.

● (1740)

We hear the Food Prices Review Board and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) say, "If you want to get food cheaper, do some canning." Mr. Speaker, how can they do more canning if they cannot get the facilities to do it with? This is the sort of thing we are talking about as far as canning lids is concerned. I hope it is not too late. I hope the government is ready to show some concern about this and do what it can to get the manufacturers to make more, because the situation in many parts of Canada today is extremely difficult.

To get back to the 2½-pound spray bags, I would not be making this request if it were not for the fact that agricultural spray manufacturing is done or controlled by multinational companies. This is what the hon. member for Waterloo-Cambridge (Mr. Saltsman) was talking about.

These sprays are allowed to come in from the United States free of tariff as long as they are in bags weighing 2½ pounds or more. I do not know why the 2½ pound bags were left out, unless it was by error. I asked the minister if he would do something about this in the last debate we had on customs tariffs. He said he would look into it. When I heard he intended to bring in a new budget I sent him a letter on May 27 asking him whether he could do something about the tariff on the 2½ pound bags, hoping they would be included in the ways and means motion and in the tariff bill now before us. But they were not. I am very surprised that nothing was done. Maybe I should take some of the blame because I did not keep after the minister in between the time he introduced the two bills, but I thought something would surely be done to change this sort of thing.

The reason we are concerned about it is that due to inflation, or the policies of the government, we find a farmer having to pay more than one third more for his spray in Canada than he pays in the United States. Fruit growers in my area tell me I ought not to be surprised if a truckload is half unloaded in the United States and half of

[Mr. Whittaker.]

it comes into Canada, and it is one third higher when it gets into Canada.

It is not hard to put a thousand dollars worth of orchard spray in the trunk of a car, and it is easy for these people to drive into the United States and buy spray down there where it is one third or more cheaper, and at \$1,000 quite a lot of money is made on their trip.

Why the multinationals are pricing this way I don't know, but I would bet that if a start were made on manufacturing these sprays in Canada they would drop their prices immediately. However, this is the situation we face. I do not think anyone on the government side of the House can blame farmers for doing whatever they can to save money on their operations.

It may sound very strange, but the reason they use these 2½ pound bags is because this is the amount of spray used per acre in spray tanks. It comes in soluble bags and farmers are able to drop them directly into the spray tank. Then they have the precise proportions needed. I do not think anyone in the Department of National Health and Welfare or in the Department of the Environment would want to change a method of operation which means that the farmer does not have to split bags of spray, or get his hands into them, or breathe spray dust, when he can get the exact size needed and drop it into the tank without having to handle it.

I had hoped the minister would have seen fit to change this in the bill before us. I certainly hope it is done very quickly, almost as quickly as the time a former minister of finance, Mr. Benson, took off the tariff on apples after he had made a deal with the United States that they were going to phase it out over a five year period. The first year he took it completely off, and left the apple grower in Canada with free trade. The tariff on apples going from Canada into the United States did not come off, because the Americans said, "When we make a deal that is the way we handle it." I hope this is done by the minister as fast as that customs tariff was changed.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I should like to say a few words on this customs tariff bill. Its contents, I suggest, are of no great importance.

It is timely that the Economic Council should have just released its discussion paper on the possibility of free trade with various parts of the world, and especially with the United States. This is a subject which has been forgotten for a considerable time. It is an issue on which one government fell in 1911, but in recent years it has become of less consequence. However, the Economic Council is to be congratulated on bringing forward this suggestion about free trade.

As one who lives in western Canada I feel that free trade, or at least freer trade, is of considerable advantage to this country. Increasingly we are finding that our manufacturing industry is expensive by world standards. For instance, the textile trade is demanding that embargoes be placed on goods coming from other countries. Our wage structure appears to be very high, even in relation to the United States. The Economic Council points out that the productivity of the United States worker is considerably higher than ours.