

Customs Tariff

For many, many years the former Liberal government gave agriculture away in its negotiations. It gave away tariff concessions for agriculture in this great agricultural Canada of ours. It gave it away to other types of industry which had high tariff protection. Because of this we had to do a tremendous amount of work. We even went so far as to point out that Canada was a saint in the world of sinners when it came to tariffs for agricultural products. Canada had nothing when compared to other countries, to protect its agriculture.

It reminds me of the Kennedy Round of Negotiations. This type of thing happened to us. The Kennedy Round negotiated the removal of the tariff on apples over an eight-year period. What happened to us? No sooner were the negotiations finished and they came back, and the former minister of finance removed completely the tariff on apples coming into Canada. Then he told the people in the agricultural community that the United States would do the same. When he went to the United States asking them to do the same, they said, "Look, when we make a negotiation that is what we mean". They did not take their tariff off. We had nothing; they had something. It was things such as this that were happening to agriculture in Canada. It was difficult to receive any information on what was going on in the negotiations. It was very, very hard to get any information. Organizations such as the horticultural council and others in Canada spent years and years trying to get something which would help the situation.

Perhaps I will say that this bill goes a long way toward doing something to assist the situation, but it does not go all the way. It does not give us a protection similar to other agricultural countries. Certainly it does not give us the protection which exists in Australia. Australia partakes in tariff negotiations, but if that country does not like one's product, it finds something to stop it completely; it is not even let in. I am not happy about concessions to Australia on canned pears. I do not understand exactly what the concessions are with Australia.

Mr. Breau: Cherries.

Mr. Whittaker: I hope the concessions will not do too much. The hon. member mentioned cherries. The former minister of agriculture said that we shipped cherries to Australia.

Mr. Breau: Crosbie said, "Cherries".

Mr. Whittaker: That will be the day. They would not have them; they would not take them.

Mr. Breau: Your minister said that.

Mr. Whittaker: Well, okay.

An hon. Member: Why do you believe him now?

Mr. Breau: I do not believe him; neither does he.

Mr. Whittaker: Perhaps the hon. member could rise and make a speech after I am finished. Sometimes he makes good ones. I agree with the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) on what he said about orders in council and regula-

[Mr. Whittaker.]

tions being established without consultation and knowing what was happening. That type of practice will not continue.

The former minister of agriculture mentioned what the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Wise) said a few months ago about Customs tariff. There was a complete and utter mess left for us when the election was called. It had to be straightened out.

Mr. Whelan: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whittaker: This bill was brought in approximately a month to six weeks before the election was called. Why was it not brought to the floor of the House? Why was it not passed? There would have been no trouble having it passed through the House quickly. It was not brought in. It was given as a concession to keep the minister quiet. Certainly his government was not willing to bring it in, and the election was called. When the season for fruit came around, there was a complete and utter mess which had to be straightened out.

Mr. Whelan: That is not true.

Mr. Whittaker: I will tell the hon. member that I have never seen such fast action in my life as that of the present cabinet. The mess was straightened out and put on the right footing.

Mr. Whelan: Tell us what they did.

Mr. Whittaker: The Minister of Agriculture contributed greatly.

Mr. Breau: It is a good thing Ray was not responsible for it; they would be bankrupt.

Mr. Whittaker: I can tell the hon. member that the minister contributed greatly because he had some clout in cabinet. The President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Baker), who is charged with the responsibility of collecting these tariffs after the bill is passed, was involved. His input was fast, sure, and decisive. The Minister of Agriculture had to come in and make some press releases.

● (2120)

We have heard members talk about surcharges. We have not asked for a surcharge for a great many years. The first time I was involved in a request for such a surcharge was in 1955, but we got absolutely nothing. There was no such surcharge established before the election. We did not obtain a surcharge because, as I believe, the then minister of agriculture could not get his five-ring circus together, and I mean the five departments that are involved. Our Minister of Agriculture has been able to accomplish a great deal in a very short time on behalf of the consumers and agricultural producers.

The hon. member for Essex-Windsor says it will take 20 days to bring a surcharge into effect. The Minister, being honest, says it could take up to 20 days even though they will work with the speed we saw at the end of last June in cleaning up the mess left by the former government. We do not have to