

Adjournment Debate

Therefore, Madam Speaker, the Department of National Defence maintains the decision made in 1982 to establish a naval presence in Quebec City.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Mark Assad (Gatineau—La Lièvre): Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago, I rose in the House with a question for the Minister of Agriculture and received a reply from the Minister of State (Agriculture). My question was about the GATT talks in Geneva, which are extremely important in connection with Quebec's supply management programs.

At the time, the government was very confident that its negotiators would be able to get the other countries on side and that our supply management system, which has worked very successfully for our farmers, would be maintained. Our defence was that it was extremely important to us, and we had plenty of evidence to prove it. In fact, we were not alone, since Japan and Ireland were also involved in these talks. However, as the weeks went by, we realized that any hopes we had in Geneva had been dashed.

I would like to raise a point which I think is very disturbing. I have here the minutes of meetings that took place with the *Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec*, when in 1987, the Minister of State for Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture had managed to convince farmers—or so they thought—that the free trade agreement was not a problem for them. They knew perfectly well the Americans never liked our supply management system.

During the free trade talks, the pressure was on, and we were finally faced with a *fait accompli*, once the free trade agreement had been signed and adopted by a vote in this House. Despite the fact that marketing boards had not been excluded from the free trade agreement, farmers still thought they could get the support of GATT and that article XI—a household word by now—could be used to protect our farm product quota system.

However, there were some doubts, because in 1987, the *Union des producteurs agricoles* and the Official Opposition said that one item that could turn out to be very important had been dropped and that we had to bear this in mind. At the time, I was sitting in the National Assembly, and the Minister of Agriculture felt there was a risk. He was right, and we are now faced with

a situation that is extremely disturbing for farmers across the country.

What we have here is a *fait accompli*, and in the next few days it will be too late to do anything about a decision that may have enormous consequences for our farmers.

• (1820)

I hope, for the sake of the Department of Agriculture and all those people who managed to convince farmers in the past, that our farmers will have nothing to fear and that they will be well protected. Since all farmers will be affected, I hope that the Department of Agriculture will find a way to provide genuine protection for all our farmers.

Mrs. Suzanne Duplessis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for External Relations and Minister of State (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)): Madam Speaker, it is absolutely clear that our position in the multilateral trade negotiations has not changed. Our negotiators are still determined to reach the MTN objectives arrived at after consultation with the agricultural industry and the provinces. These objectives are: significant reduction of trade distorting subsidies and in particular export subsidies; better access to export markets; clarification and amendment of GATT's rules, especially article XI, to make them fairer and more effective; establishment of rules to prevent improper use of health and safety regulations to hinder trade.

Canada is still determined to have its proposition to clarify and strengthen article XI accepted by GATT. The government is still committed to protecting our supply management systems. Article XI allows countries to restrict imports in support of supply management efficiency. However, some conditions are not very clear and almost impossible to meet, and are the subject of controversy. We must agree on an interpretation of article XI in order to strengthen it and clarify its meaning. To that end, all parties must agree to negotiate.

Canada introduced a proposal to clarify article XI. Our negotiators have worked very hard to find support for this proposal. Our ministers have also done their part, explaining our position to all parties involved. In September, Mr. Blais went to Geneva, and Mr. Wilson and Mr. McKnight were there this week. They all reaffirmed Canada's determination to have this proposal regarding article XI approved. Canada will continue to follow the same objectives—clarification of article XI in particular—throughout the Uruguay Round.