

compared, for example, with last year, and I am suggesting we do something about this from now on. As I say, if I am missing the point I should like the parliamentary secretary to tell me. He has been very helpful so far.

Mr. Ritchie (York East): I do not think the hon. member is missing anything that is right before his eyes at all. To answer one of the points he made, I understand that these rates were not set in negotiation with GATT but that if we wanted to raise them now we would have to go back to GATT. That is the only implication as far as GATT is concerned of which I am aware.

On the question of the effect on duty payable, there are two points to be made. The first is that the previous government chose only to put into effect those parts of the measure which lowered duties. We have estimated a decline in duties collected of about \$5 million in the current fiscal year. Next year, though, we expect a slight increase in the duties collected. Taking account of the length of the season, the weighted average collection of duties is expected to rise from 5.4 per cent to 6.1 per cent, and that .7 per cent increase should mean a slight increase in duty collections.

Mr. Peters: I thank the parliamentary secretary for that information. I understand, then, that the GATT figures cannot be changed here. Will they supersede or apply on top of this, or are we still going to change our customs and duty regulations unilaterally rather than in the way it is being done by GATT? Are they going to specify the periods? The understanding that many of us have is that they are going to set the regulations. This is one of the reasons we are interested in the time element of the exemption periods and the periods in which duty is applied.

● (1610)

Mr. Ritchie (York East): Mr. Chairman, I cannot add very much to what I said previously to the hon. member. My understanding is that, first of all, this act stands by itself, it cannot be interfered with by GATT, and, second, in effect the food and agricultural negotiations have been largely taken out of recent GATT agreements. So I think the basic thing is that, so far as the act is concerned, there is no limitation from known GATT actions.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, before we pass clause I should like some assurance as to the trigger mechanism. I know it has been said by a number of people in this debate that that trigger mechanism is sufficient. It is my guess that if it were sufficient, we would still have a strawberry crop in Niagara and we would still be producing soft fruits in that area in competition with a number of other areas, which we are not.

It seems to me that in the representations that have been made to the agricultural committee it has been stated that the trigger mechanism does not work because the tariff board administers it instead of the Department of Agriculture. It has been the gist of the arguments in the representations made before the committee that if the Minister of Agriculture would trigger the mechanism, it would work. As I understand it,

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they are not complaining about the times, just about how they apply it and when they apply it. I understood from the parliamentary secretary a little while ago that this might take anywhere from two days to two weeks and that there was some discussion about setting an exact date, but that was waived. Would setting the exact date or period not be much more advantageous if it were inserted in the act and lengthened, rather than having a trigger mechanism which is not very responsive to the needs of producers?

I am raising this question simply because we have a potential in Canada right now in relation to energy and developments that are taking place, and we have had great difficulty with the hot house industry in this country. Now we are going to put some more money into the hot house industry and operate it in conjunction with Ontario Hydro, using heat from nuclear plants and thermal plants to generate that kind of production.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his time has expired.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, we are allowed 20 minutes.

Mr. Froese: Mr. Chairman, I would like to explain some of the areas referred to by the hon. member so far as tariff agreements are concerned and so far as the trigger mechanism in this legislation proposed by our party is concerned. The fact is that, first of all, GATT has taken agriculture out of the stringent agreements which existed before and has adopted a different approach to the problem. Yet there is a ceiling on the amount that we can charge for tariffs which have been agreed to under the agreement here. For any of the upper levels to be changed there would have to be another agreement, but to go down from these is up to our country.

The mechanism which the Minister of Agriculture has proposed lately is completely new. It is something that the industry has wanted for the simple reason that previously, in order to get any tariff protection, one would have to prove injury, which many times would take months in the courts, by which time the commodity would be completely off the market. With the trigger mechanism, they will know what the commodity can bear and then can apply the mechanism even if there is only a danger. This is something that has never before occurred in the history of agriculture.

When I listen to hon. members opposite I conclude that they support this legislation. I agree that perhaps there are areas that we should consider, but let us pass this legislation since it is the best that has ever been put forward to protect horticulture in our country.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, I commend the hon. member for his devotion to his party. I am not sure whose legislation this is, the Liberals or the Conservatives, but if it is going to do what the hon. member says it will, then certainly I am pleased.

In my part of the country we do not grow too many vegetables for export and we are not too concerned with