

Canadian Trade Policy

Mr. Kaplan: The first objective was the reduction or elimination of the trade restricting or distorting effects of non-tariff measures and bringing such measures under more effective international scrutiny and discipline. That was our first goal, stated back in 1973. Hon. members will be interested to know that a panel which has been working in this area has been studying the DISC measure introduced in the United States recently. I think most hon. members are familiar with that. Other European tax concessions have also been studied by the same panel and are now in the process of being reported publicly to the negotiators at Geneva.

Our second goal, the goal which was outlined very clearly by the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Sharp), is a substantial reduction of tariffs on both industrial and agricultural products. Does the opposition agree? Perhaps we will never know.

Our third goal is a significant improvement in the terms of access for agricultural exports, resulting in a greater role, over time, for comparative advantage and increased stability in international trade.

Our fourth goal is to select sectors for a comprehensive attack on all barriers to trade, especially where these impede the processing and upgrading of resources in the country of origin. One hon. member opposite referred to the sectoral approach. This is what goal No. 4 refers to. We introduced the idea of the sectoral approach at Tokyo, as this country ought to be aware. We have been advocating that position ever since, and our position on it at this point in time is far more clear than is the position of the United States, for all the machinery Congress has set up to guide the administration.

Our fifth goal is improved opportunities for developing countries to increase their export earnings.

Those are our goals, but it should be obvious when looking at them that there is a lot left unsaid. We have not put our final cards on the table. We have not indicated, at the negotiating table or in the country, what is the final, hard, tough and last package we are prepared to accept, but can hon. members opposite seriously argue that we should put our final position on the table? What interest would it serve if other parties such as the United States or the European Common Market came to the negotiating table, as they are, with their cards pretty close to their chests? They are not yet ready to state what their final bargaining position is, but they would certainly like to know ours. What could be more prejudicial to Canadian long-term interests than having all our cards on the table at this point?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kaplan: I think that is a wrong-headed notion. There ought to be a close to the chest element at this point in time, and it ought to continue for some while yet. However, as I mentioned, hon. members opposite had their opportunity to be briefed by our negotiators.

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

● (2050)

I want to describe the whole process involving and consulting the public, for making sure that the sectors interested in various aspects of the negotiations are consulted. In November, 1973, the government announced the establishment of the Canadian Trade and Tariffs Committee to receive the views of all Canadian interests with respect to Canadian participation in the trade negotiations. The then minister of industry, trade and commerce said that the negotiations would be of vital importance to all sectors of the Canadian economy and to all regions in Canada. He emphasized that, in view of the complexity and potential scope of the negotiations, the government was anxious to receive the views of all interested groups. So that people in all regions would have a better opportunity to put forward their views it was decided that the Canadian Trade and Tariffs Committee should hold sessions in different parts of the country. He also emphasized that the CTTC would remain in existence throughout the negotiations and that there would be continuing opportunities for further consultations as the negotiations evolved.

This is exactly what has been happening. Indeed, since its establishment, the CTTC has received and considered over 200 briefs. In addition to these written briefs it has also held detailed discussions with many organizations which have requested such consultations. These consultations have provided an opportunity not only to assess and discuss the views of the organizations concerned on individual aspects of the negotiations, but also have provided an opportunity for a continuing exchange of information on the progress of the negotiations. The regular contacts which many departments have with unions, companies and trade associations, have continued and indeed have been intensified during this period, so that this has provided another channel of communication.

The government also established a Trade Negotiations Co-ordinating Committee. This committee, which meets at the deputy minister level, provides a direct link between the government and the delegation in Geneva. Its role is to make sure the ministers are kept informed of the progress of the work and that instructions are provided to the delegation on particular issues. And of course the ministers are here, in Ottawa, totally accessible in a number of ways to the public and to the House.

In order to ensure that the CTTC plays an effective role in the consultation process, the chairman of the CTTC is a member of the co-ordinating committee. I refer to these arrangements because they reflect the concern of the government to ensure that the views expressed to the CTTC are taken into account in the decision-making process and are reflected in the advice and recommendations provided to ministers. I would have thought that hon. members opposite would comment about this structure, but they did not. Perhaps they do not know of its existence. Perhaps they did not take the trouble to look into it.

The actual negotiations are being conducted by a delegation which is headed by Ambassador Grey, former assistant deputy minister of finance. Deputy head of the delegation is Mr.