

Government Orders

If that was not enough we come back to the latest row, U.S. fears Durum imports. Here is another little hooker in U.S. trade legislation that no one quite talked about, that the previous Minister of Agriculture or the Minister for International Trade did not quite get around to talking to our farm community about. That is that under the U.S. trade legislation, commodity groups, producer groups and industrial groups now have the right to petition the department of commerce when they see an export from Canada that they do not like. They can petition the U.S. commerce department to do their research for them, to do all the work for them. It is cost free harassment. Why would they not use it? Why would they not say "Well, I can carve out a bigger market for myself by pushing out Canadian exports and I can get the U.S. government to do the work for me. I do not have to pay anything, I just fill out a petition". Why would they not do it?

When we presented exactly the same case on the floor of this House when we debated the trade bill, our minister of trade said that we do not need it because we are going to defend our farmers.

The North Dakota Wheat Association is now taking a petition to the U.S. department of commerce to look at Canadian Durum imports. It is having all the research done for them. If our farm community is going to combat that it will have to raise a couple of million dollars to pay for those high priced Washington lawyers and lobbyists to make the case.

Is it any wonder that there is a great sense of disillusionment, one end of this country does not know where to turn.

I do not want to depress you further, Mr. Speaker, because I know you are deeply sensitive about these issues, but the fact of the matter is that it does not stop there either. As part of this new program, the new renaissance for agriculture in Canada, we now have the Canadian delegation at Geneva tabling a new negotiating paper on agriculture subsidies. Let us put aside for a moment all the protestations of the Minister of Agriculture and the minister of trade that they are here to defend the Canadian farmer.

• (1630)

What they are negotiating as our senior officials at Geneva tabled is what they call a "tariffication program", which would lump together all of the subsidy programs and give it a tariff equivalent. Then they would negotiate how we can reduce that total bundle of tariff programs. The transportation subsidy programs, grain stabilization, drought assistance and advance cash payments programs—everything—are going to be put in the same bundle. A value is going to be attached to it, and then we are going to negotiate with all the other countries to bring those values down. What that means is that we put every single agricultural support program up for bargaining, up for negotiation.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is that an honest approach for the Canadian farmer? Is that what we are saying to them? I suppose, if you are one of those big agri-corporate farm organizations with multi-billion dollar markets around the world, that is not going to bother you too much. But if you are a farmer with a section or two in western Canada or in southwestern Ontario, growing some corn or with a dairy basis, it does bother you. All of a sudden you find out that you cannot pay your bills any more and that the kind of support program that you relied upon, like advance cash payments or grain transportation programs or whatever it may be, simply will not be there.

What do you tell your kids who want to keep on farming? What do you say to your son or your daughter? Do you say: "Stay in the farming business. It is a great opportunity"? Or, do you say: "Maybe you should become a chartered accountant so you can go to work for the government trying to figure out how the GST is going to really mess up the Canadian economy"? That is the biggest employment opportunity that Canadians will face. That is what we are going to tell them to do.

Mr. Harvard: Be a tax cop.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Oh, sure. My friend from Winnipeg St. James says what we could probably do is hire all of those people who have to leave the farm to become tax policemen, or maybe go to work for the banks that are now foreclosing on the mortgages. We can have an army of people out there determining how they can wring further every seed from the lemon of a farm community in this country. That is the new Tory plan.