

Supply—Trade and Commerce

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): This afternoon we listened to a speech by the Minister of Trade and Commerce which I did not think was quite up to his usual level. I have no doubt that when the minister makes decisions, as he does from time to time—and we all know and respect his capacity—he exposes all sides of the problem. What disappointed me as I listened to him this afternoon was that we were really just hearing one of those rather tiresome bits of self-congratulation which, I suppose, please those who utter them, but which I do not think add greatly to the amount of human knowledge on the subject.

Apparently at the end of that speech we were supposed to sing the *Te Deum* and call it a day, because when the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth undertook to make some critical observations the minister seemed to be extremely nettled, and proceeded to embark upon a series of observations which surprised me and which, as I say, did not do him much credit.

He began by saying, "We have just listened to a political speech filled with inaccuracies which should be answered immediately". And then the minister purported to answer the inaccuracies. But so far as I could discover, what he did was not to answer inaccuracies but rather to explain certain difficulties which are in the way of trade—and which of course we all recognize. He said, "I am taking every item of my hon. friend's speech and turning it inside out to show the ridiculous nature of the situation". That does not seem to me to be a very sensible way to begin a speech.

Having said that, the minister then went on, first of all, to the item of oats. He quarrelled, not with the facts which the hon. member for Brant-Wentworth stated; he undertook to say—this was a legitimate argument to make—that oats are usually consumed at home and therefore the figure which was given was misleading.

Then we got to cheese. The minister talked a lot about cheese, quite sensibly on the whole, but then he finally wound up by saying that this was entirely a matter where the Ontario government was to blame. It seemed to me that that was a very poor performance after what he had undertaken to do, which was to take every item in my hon. friend's speech and turn it inside out.

Then he shifted away entirely from the British market, which perhaps was wise because after all it is in the United States that our trade has chiefly grown. Then he talked about our export market as a whole and resumed his usual rather boastful line. We are all glad that our exports have increased

[Mr. Thatcher.]

and all that we are asking is that the minister try to give us, as he would in any business discussion, a picture of our position. He should not just tell us the favourable things without indicating that there are some hazards to the position. He knows better than any of us that there are certain producers in the country having a bad time. He knows probably better than any of us the reason for that. All that we ask is that he does not shy away from these things and treat us like little children. All that we ask is that he treat this House of Commons as he would treat any serious group of men.

Then he made one statement which I did not quite understand, although this may have been due to his being in an impatient mood. He asked the hon. member to subside and then went on to make a rather curious statement. He said that the hon. member "must be sure he was wrong because he was so persistent in throwing my statement off balance." I am sure the minister will be glad to explain what that means. I do not know exactly what it means. At any rate it did not live up to what he had said at first, that he was going to turn the statements inside out. So much for that.

As I say, what I have to complain about in the minister's speech is that I think we are entitled to be treated as more or less mature people and be given a picture of the situation. As I have said, the minister knows that there are people in this country who are suffering from unemployment. He knows the situation in the textile industry. He knows the situation in the pulp business, no doubt better than any of us. Those are the things which are relevant and which should be brought to our attention when we are discussing these matters.

The hon. member for Moose Jaw raised some very relevant matters with regard to the United States. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of economic history will appreciate what the hon. member for Moose Jaw, and I think also the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggan pointed out, that it is a chancy business to deal with the United States. I remember a senior member of the Republican party, a gentleman who is still active in United States politics, who said something to me some years ago which registered deeply in my mind. He said, "Of course, you people in Canada must face the fact that if business should become not so good and we have surpluses here you will find that we will again become tariff minded." As a matter of fact there are indications of that right now.