

*Customs Tariff*

own behalf on the current state of the multilateral trade negotiations. At this time, may I thank my parliamentary secretary for having yesterday carried this bill successfully through the committee stage.

**Mr. Mazankowski:** He will make a good replacement for the minister.

**Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton):** I say to the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) that there is lots of bench strength on this side of the House and it will be many years before he will exercise the responsibilities of which he is capable.

Let me now speak about the arrangements and prospects for the multilateral trade negotiations now being undertaken in Geneva under the auspices of the GATT. These negotiations were formally launched in Tokyo in September, 1973, by the ministers of some 90 countries. However, the start of substantive negotiations had been delayed until the United States government could obtain a negotiating mandate from congress. The American administration has now received the required authority in the Trade Act which the President signed earlier this month. The other major participants, notably Japan and the European Economic Community, have already given their negotiators the authority they need to sit down at the negotiating table. Indeed, a meeting of the GATT trade negotiations committee is to be held in Geneva next month to begin this new and substantive phase of the so-called Tokyo round.

In these circumstances, the government decided that the time had come to appoint a Canadian negotiating delegation to Geneva. As hon. members are aware, the appointment of the delegation was announced by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) on Monday. It is to be headed by the Assistant Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr. Rodney Grey, who will be ably supported by members of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and others. As in past international negotiations of this type, the departments which carry the main responsibility or expertise in trade policy matters are represented on this delegation. The delegation, however, will receive its instructions from the government itself. It will report directly to a trade negotiations co-ordinating committee in Ottawa. That committee, which has been established at the deputy minister level, will, I hope, be supervised by the committee of ministers and will advise the government on the progress of the negotiations and make recommendations as to the positions Canada should adopt on particular issues.

I wish to emphasize that any decisions as to the objectives which we should pursue in these negotiations and what our negotiators should be authorized to offer in return will be made by ministers. The government has also established a Canadian Trade and Tariffs Committee which is to receive the views of individual firms, industry associations and farm, labour and consumer groups. The CTTC, which is composed of officials from the departments most concerned with the negotiations, will also be ready to receive views from the provincial governments either on the negotiations in general or on particular subjects. In addition, some ministers have already had discussions with their provincial colleagues on this subject and I expect that these discussions will be pursued. Of

[Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton).]

course, reports will be presented to the House from time to time either by myself or by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce.

Let me say a word about the scope of the negotiations and their timing. These are matters, of course, which my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, may wish to deal with in more detail at some future date and on an appropriate occasion. The scope of the negotiations, naturally, will depend upon the ability of the participating governments to find common areas of mutual advantage. The negotiations are potentially far reaching and will cover non-tariff as well as tariff barriers, and agricultural as well as industrial products. They must also lead in some areas to a rewriting, or at any rate a review, of existing international trade rules. For these reasons I do not think we can expect the negotiations to be completed quickly. Moreover, in the tariff area the United States administration, under the provisions of the Trade Act, will not very likely be in a position to put a tariff offer on the table in Geneva until the beginning of July. It is doubtful, therefore, if meaningful negotiations on tariffs at least can begin much before next autumn. I should also point out that any tariff reductions which are agreed to will probably be phased in over a period of years.

This, plus the fact that congress will have to approve most, if not all, agreements on non-tariff barriers to which the United States is a party, indicates that the impact of the negotiations will not be fully felt for a number of years. I must emphasize this because there are those who claim it is not realistic to talk about further trade liberalization at a time of slower economic growth in the industrialized world. My belief is that we should press forward with these trade talks despite the conditions that now prevail in many countries. It seems to me that negotiations of this type offer the best prospects for renewed growth in world trade. They can pave the way for future expansion in the economies of both the developed and the developing countries. Canada, as one of the world's major trading nations, clearly has an important stake in the negotiations and we intend to pursue our interests vigorously throughout these discussions.

This, I think, is a fair summary of where matters now stand. I assure the House that as Minister of Finance, particularly as the minister responsible for the Customs Tariff, I intend to participate actively, as does the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, in the preparation and direction of these negotiations.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, I realize that I was on the verge of being out of order when I asked the minister to make a comment yesterday or in the previous debate. But I did this deliberately because, if the minister had not spoken, our first opportunity of hearing and questioning the appropriate minister would only come in committee in two months time or so during consideration of the estimates. I particularly want to highlight the dissatisfaction of members on this side, and of some on the government side, with our present method of handling estimates in committee. There is absolutely no way of bringing public attention to a ministerial statement of the type we have heard if it is made in committee. The media just misses such statements, unless attention has first been drawn to them.