

Customs Tariff

growing feeling of protectionism in the European countries. I would have to be convinced that the Europeans will open up their agricultural markets to the Canadians. I will never believe that.

Some time ago I did a study when I had nothing better to do of the agricultural distribution in France. After going through that exercise I can assure the House that if France ever gives way and allows their agricultural market to open up to Canadians, then it will be a raw day.

We have to look ahead now and consider what will happen if there is an impasse at Geneva. Where do we go from there? Do we continue or form some sort of broader trading agreement with the United States whereby we can try to even up some of our tariffs and divide some of the production? Should we renegotiate the auto pact or have another close look at the auto pact? Maybe we can extend it into some other area. We will have to examine that. While a lot of people believe that something will come out of the GATT conference, the current opinion that I have gathered from people who have been there is that if there is any settlement made it will be a political settlement. In other words, political leaders will have to knock the heads of people at the meetings and say: "This is the way it is going to be". Of course, the political leadership we have in this country places Canada in a great deal of jeopardy.

Those are concerns we have as we progress with Bill C-48. Later I will go into this bill clause by clause and discuss some of these individual items. No doubt this bill will pass in due course. There seems to be no reason to hold it up. However, this is a good opportunity for us to express our concerns. We can indicate to the government opposite that there are people in this House who are knowledgeable in the trade field and who should be brought into the trade discussions. We should be told more of what is going on so that we can do our job effectively as members of parliament and also make a contribution to those negotiations.

Mr. Ron Huntington (Capilano): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Kempling) I take this opportunity to put on the record a few comments concerning Bill C-48, an act to amend the customs tariff.

These hours in the history of Canada are very important. I wonder if many Canadians realize the onus and the weight that is on the shoulders of the negotiators in the Tokyo Round of the Geneva General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs as it concerns the standard of living that is ahead for all of us in Canada. The current GATT negotiations which have been in place since 1973 are probably one of the most fundamental and important negotiations that are going on in Canada's history, and will determine well into the next decade the standard of living and the nature that Canadian life will take. They will determine the extent of growth in the g.n.p. and, in general, the position that we will be taking in the industrialized world. They involve a progressive dismantling of barriers to trade and will establish the framework in which such trade will be conducted.

We are negotiating tariff levels, a proposed elimination, and a reduction of barriers. We are negotiating proposed codes of international conduct. We are concerned about the technical standards that are imposed by the various nations negotiating in GATT. I might say this involves about 95 per cent of the trading world. It is only the People's Republic of China, the U.S.S.R. and a few Middle East countries that are not involved in these negotiations. We are dealing with and are concerned with government procurement policies, both here and in other countries. We are dealing with basic rules involving subsidies.

My colleague the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth (Mr. Kempling) described the DISC program in the United States. I know personally of transport subsidies which interfere with proper trade. Countervailing tariffs are another matter which give us very serious concern in these negotiations.

The bureaucrats who carry this weight in the negotiations have talked extensively, I understand, with many associations in Canada. The input into these negotiations has been pretty much one way. They have talked to various associations in agriculture, the Horticultural Association, the Canadian Food Processors Association, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association. All of these groups have had their input into the matters that we need to discuss in these negotiations. There have been inter-departmental committees at work. As I said, I do not think there is anything going on that will have a greater effect on our lives tomorrow and well into the eighties and nineties.

The tentative lists of these agreements have been tabled in Geneva. They indicate the specific concessions in each field that each country wants to be negotiated. These include both tariff and non-tariff measures. We are told that these lists should remain confidential. I question the validity of that. I am sure the negotiators on behalf of the industries in the United States are not kept from further input during these trade-off sessions. I do not know why the people and industry of Canada should be held under a cloak of secrecy in matters as important as the GATT negotiations now going on.

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One of the serious criticisms that has to be made is the one way or diode nature of the inputs. A lot went in. Nothing is feeding back. The people in the industry of Canada who are vitally concerned, and the associations vitally concerned, should be part and parcel of the amendments to these negotiations. I would like to see us improve in matters of this importance the consultative process in the country so that we can share in, and perhaps remove some of, the burden that is on these negotiators.

I spent many years in the farm community. One example was brought to my attention by consumers in my constituency whom you would think would normally be concerned about the purchasing power of their spending dollar. Their priority concern is the condition of Canadian agriculture. That was quite a surprise.