

Employment Support Bill

else to say about products that cannot administratively be handled within the ambit of this bill. I am speaking with respect to compensation, and so on. There are other matters that I intend to deal with in a very few moments.

Mr. Stanfield: I shall wait ten minutes.

• (9:30 p.m.)

Mr. Olson: It is obvious, however, that this will not solve all the problems. For example, many agricultural commodities are exported to the U.S. in non-processed form. Under circumstances such as this, where agricultural producers' returns are seriously affected by the U.S. surcharge but where compensation cannot be provided through this bill, provisions can be made through programs administered by the Department of Agriculture to stabilize returns. Here the government has available the Agricultural Stabilization Act under which wide powers are given to assist producers through periods of price disruptions. Under it, the Agricultural Stabilization Board may be authorized to (a) purchase any agricultural commodity, (b) make payments to producers of agricultural commodity—these are commonly known as deficiency payments and represent the difference between the support price and the average price at which the commodity is sold—or (c) the board can make payments for the benefit of producers. We have done this many times. Thus, payments could be made to entities other than the individual producer should this be considered to be desirable. We have done this in a number of cases, Mr. Speaker, in agreements with certain processors and people involved in the trade, on the basis that they undertake it will be for the benefit of and therefore passed directly back to the producers.

Thus, while it is important that provisions be made in this bill to ensure that agricultural producers will receive treatment at least equivalent to that obtainable by the non-agricultural sectors of the economy affected by trade disruption, these other avenues of assistance are available and will be favourably considered by the government on a commodity by commodity basis. While these measures may not in total solve all of the price problems our farm producers may face in the weeks ahead which may result from the supply position of particular commodities—and this can happen on both sides of the border—they will, however, I am confident, go a long way toward solving market abnormalities resulting from the effect of the surcharge on agricultural commodities entering the U.S. market.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the processing plants, where it is administratively feasible—that is, processing plants processing agricultural products—will be required to give assurance that not only the employment in those plants but the prices paid to the producers of agricultural products being processed in those plants can be maintained and an application can be made for compensation. In addition, as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, there are some commodities where it is administratively difficult, impossible, or indeed where there is very little or no processing involved. We intend to initiate programs that will indeed provide for the losses, or some of the

[Mr. Olson.]

losses that have been suffered as a result of disruption in those market areas as well.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski) is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Mazankowski: I wonder if the minister would answer a question. His agricultural news release indicated that something in the order of \$19.5 million of cereal grains, mill grains, malts and starches would be affected under the program he has outlined this evening. Can the minister indicate how there will be any compensation for this \$19.5 million worth of grain that has been traditionally shipped to the United States?

Mr. Olson: Most of that, of course, is the \$12.9 million worth of barley shipped in 1970. In addition to that, there are some brewers and distillers grains that have been shipped. We expect that the surtax there will be completely removed on, I believe, January 1 because that is one of the items that was slated for a reduction to nil tariff. With regard to that \$19 million, I do not want it to be misunderstood that there will be a complete payment through either the Agricultural Stabilization Board or the employment support act, but there are avenues open and I give an undertaking tonight that we are going to look at these on a commodity by commodity basis and utilize the Agricultural Stabilization Board to assist in those areas which are severely hurt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. member rising on a point of order? He may ask the minister a question if the minister is in agreement.

Mr. Gleave: As I read the list that the minister sent over, there will be an increase on the duty for both chicks and turkey products going into the United States. Is there something on hand to deal with this situation?

Mr. Olson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I pointed out and as ministers, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) in particular, pointed out, at this point in time we are not prepared to make a detailed account. That will be dealt with or put through one or the other of these acts, because we have to assess how much damage has been done to the industry and to prices generally. We have to bear in mind that there are some commodities where the price freeze in the United States can move up by the amount of the surtax. If that happens, we will hopefully be continuing to sell into that market at the same level as if the surtax had not been applied. We have to take this into account. There will certainly be other commodities where to remain competitive in that market the surtax will have to be absorbed by someone on the Canadian side. It is under those conditions that we intend to be helpful.

Mr. Gleave: May I be permitted one further question? Can the minister indicate who the "someone on the Canadian side" will be who will absorb these losses?