

Mr. McCain: That means legislative protection to back up our negotiators before they leave our shores. If we are to consider agriculture as an important industry, and it is; if we are to consider the treatment which was extended to the textile industry, and I support that; if we consider the support that is being requested for the boot and shoe industry, and they should get some protection; and if we are prepared to protect tens of thousands of jobs in a particular sector of our economy by negotiations with other nations, we are morally compelled to recognize the need of the agricultural industry.

There are tens of thousands of families living on farms, tens of thousands of employees working on farms, and uncounted thousands of people producing the products they produce. We are not looking at the farmer alone. We are looking at the multiplier effect, the purchase of machinery, the processing of food, the transportation of food, the whole item which can contribute to our economy. That is what we are looking at.

● (1542)

Rural and city members have supported the protection of other industries. Agricultural interests must be protected, and we beseech the city men to move this consumer-oriented group on Your Honour's right to recognize that there are other items besides textiles and boots and shoes which need protection. Those two industries may be in the constituencies of some of those who sit on your right, Mr. Speaker, but so are the farmers. I would support protection for those splinter industries which are in difficulties in this country. I point out again that the hearings which were held to inquire into these matters heard the presentations made to them and outlined the facts.

Consider, for example, the nature of the protection which is presently offered. Unfortunately Canada chose at one point in time to levy specific duties on agricultural products arriving in this country. They ranged from half a cent to 2 cents a pound representing, then, from 15 to 20 per cent ad valorem. At the time they were imposed, these duties provided an excellent level of protection. Our competitors, on the other hand, were wiser. They applied an ad valorem duty to products arriving on their market from Canada. The effect of this is that the amount of duty rises in proportion to the price of the product, and protection is increased accordingly. But what is the average effect today of a specific duty amounting to so many cents a pound? Some estimate that it is as low as .9 per cent. Others estimate that it averages as high as 3.5 per cent. Whatever the actual figure, when it is compared with the ad valorem duties imposed by our competitors it is virtually ineffectual, and it is becoming less and less effective every year as production costs increase.

It seems to me it is useless to make this speech, Mr. Speaker, because for five years I have been trying to deliver this message. For the last 20 years others have been trying unsuccessfully to get it across. I wish to quote in a general way the then minister of agriculture when he spoke to the Canadian Horticultural Council about six years ago. His statement was, in effect: the government of Canada has adopted a cheap food policy; you are not going to get help; you are not going to

get protection; if it becomes too hot, get out of the kitchen. That was his closing phrase. Mr. Speaker, it has got too hot in too many instances. Take the example of tomatoes.

About the date that speech was made in 1971 Canada imported 41 million pounds of canned tomatoes—I am rounding off these figures. After that policy had been in effect for six years Canada was importing 96 million pounds of tomatoes. That represents a twofold increase of tomato importation over that period. Well, it got too hot in Canada and some of the producers got out. Our importation of tomato paste went up by six million pounds in the same period, and our importation of juice by two million pounds. Altogether, there was an increase of roughly 56 million pounds in tomato imports consequent upon the fact that this industry in Canada has been denuded of protection. Total imports did not double, but they still hurt.

Go back a little further, to 1962. You will find, Mr. Speaker, that total imports of tomato products amounted to 40 million pounds. In 1976 the total was 151 million pounds. That represents an increase of 375 per cent in tomato products imports during the period this cheap food policy has been in effect. That policy has continued under the present Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) and it is regrettable that this should be the case.

Earlier on I read a large number of figures into the record, but I propose to read them again because we are reaching the gate of the GATT meetings and we must press for consideration and protection. At the present time we are paying altogether too much for tomato products because the level of production on the North American continent is down. Because the Canadian industry has been depressed due to unfair competition from other parts of the world, the number of growers producing tomatoes here has been declining almost on an annual basis.

What has science done to help the industry? In 1949 the average crop yield per acre was 5.84 tons. In 1969-70, the average yield was 17.54 tons. By the use of scientific methods now available to them, growers have trebled the yield per acre. They have been able to maintain part of the industry but they are capable of maintaining another 10,000-12,000 acres, which would mean another 7,000 to 12,000 jobs, and in their presentation have committed themselves to doing so at reasonable prices competitive with those of other major suppliers.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the result of the cheap food policy. I wish some of the hon. members opposite could understand that when Canada becomes dependent on foreign sources for its food requirements those same sources are going to take us for more than they should; they will take us for more than the Canadian farmer would get for producing the product at home, and it is being penny wise and pound foolish to open the door to the United States for strawberries, or to Taiwan for mushrooms, and so on. Agriculture has never asked that it should have the benefit of 100 per cent of the market. But it has asked that it be allowed to retain its historic position.

Agriculture has accounted for \$1.3 billion in trade surpluses. It is, therefore, an industry worthy of protection, particularly