

foods. In light of what has already happened, it will not be possible for this segment of the primary agricultural industry to be compensated in any way. The processors, being good businessmen and realizing that they could not compete without some action to counter the 10 per cent surcharge, reduced the price at which they bought the blueberries from the primary producers. The primary producers are already paying the price of the surtax. How is the government going to compensate them?

The government has spoken of the need to be careful that fruit processors, utilizing government grants, do not place themselves in a position to under-bid competition to the full extent of those grants. That is one form of protection. But what about protection for the primary producers who are already receiving less money for their products? They can be hit in two ways. The processors stand to gain from the relief afforded to them, but I doubt very much that they will pass this relief back to the primary producers.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Another example has been brought to my attention by my colleague the hon. member for Halifax-East Hants (Mr. McCleave) and it deals with fisheries. This 10 per cent is going to be taken out of the pockets of the fishermen. In my own area, Mr. Speaker, we have a greenhouse industry which sends literally hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of cut flowers to the United States every month through the Port of Detroit. This is a multi-million dollar industry. One operator told me the surtax would cut immediately into his profit to the extent of \$20,000. Under the bill as presently drafted, these operators do not qualify. They are primary producers but just because these flowers have been cut, they are classified as a processed commodity and not exempt in any way from the American surcharge. They have to pay the 10 per cent and with the increase in the value of the Canadian dollar of 8 per cent, they are faced with an 18 per cent tariff. The industry cannot stand this loss in revenue, Mr. Speaker. There is not much profit any more, so what are we going to tell these people?

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson), in dealing with the whole subject of agriculture,—and those engaged in the industry must look to him for guidance—did not suggest a solution in his speech. He spoke in terms that did not mean anything. He said, “perhaps”; he said, “maybe”, and, “if”; “We will look into the matter”; “We will study the matter”; “We will listen to your representations”; “We are going to deal with it on a commodity by commodity basis”. He said that anything not covered under this bill would be looked at under the Stabilization Act. We have learned from bitter experience, Mr. Speaker, that it takes so long to do something like this that we are out of business before the government makes a decision. It is not a matter of a day or a week or a month. This government proposed to give \$100 million to farmers in the west, but they have not got it and they will not get it until it is expedient to bolster the sagging Liberal party in the west. They will get it then, but the farmers in our area cannot wait for political expediency. Measures like this could put them out of

Employment Support Bill

business. So we see, Mr. Speaker, that this program is not a solution.

We found out something else as agriculturalists and small businessmen, Mr. Speaker. We found out that whenever there is an economic crisis, as far as this government is concerned we are too far down on the list of those who are important. If we are a small business or a small agricultural industry, we cannot get the ear of the government. If the president of one of the automobile companies calls one of the ministers there is an emergency cabinet meeting that day or the next day. If a small businessman or a small agricultural industry is in difficulty, it must first make representations to the minister concerned and if it can get an audience within 90 days it is indeed fortunate. To have the problem placed on the agenda of this cabinet, which must deal with many problems, means such a long wait that it is almost hopeless and futile to make such an attempt.

This government asks us to go along with them, to help them out, to support them in this crusade to save Canada's businesses and the jobs of the people of this nation. They say, “Let's do something to keep people from being unemployed”. When we have 600,000 people already who cannot find jobs they say, “Help us; support us”. All of a sudden they have become aware of the facts of life. The reason this government is placing such importance on this particular measure, and the reason we have these cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries engaging in a debate earnestly and progressively, one after another, is that all of a sudden this is not a problem that can be hidden behind doors or piled up for future consideration. This is not a problem they can crawl out from under by setting up a royal commission to report on it or, as they solved so many problems, by instituting a task force to look into it and to report some two years later. No, Mr. Speaker, because of its very nature this problem hit the press immediately. Everybody was involved. All Canadians were involved. Nations were involved, so this government had to bring it out in the open and, for the first time in this Parliament, take action in a way that the populace of Canada could see exactly what they were doing.

We are not surprised that they have been delinquent. We are not surprised that they would bring in a measure like this. We are surprised, however, that for the first time they would indicate that a measure brought in by this government might not be a cure-all. It is something new to have a minister admit that perhaps they have not got all the answers. They are now under the scrutiny of the people of Canada who can see what they are doing, who can sense that they are fumbling in the dark and do not know the answers. For the first time, this government is being forced to do something on behalf of the people. They have had ample opportunity to demonstrate their concern for the industry of this nation. For months and months, negotiations have been carried on by the European Common Market countries. This market is vital to Canada, but what has been our contribution? We have been lurking around in the alcoves and hallways hoping we could find out what was going on. We are not in the inner circle. We have no guarantees that our trade will