

Canadian Trade Policy

would agree that it is a matter of continuing concern as opposed to one of crisis proportions.

I am guided, in addition, by another factor, namely, that under paragraph 5 of the Standing Order the Chair must always take into account whether or not the problem is of such a nature that it is likely to be discussed in some other way. Certainly, having just completed the debate on the Speech from the Throne, one can scarcely say there has not been recently a fresh opportunity to discuss in fullest amplitude the problem of unemployment. Between now and the few weeks that remain before the end of the first trimester, a number of opposition days have been set aside, and I would be surprised, as I am sure all hon. members would, if at least on one occasion the matter of unemployment statistics, figures and the situation generally were not discussed.

Therefore, I would have to hold, in the first instance, that rather than being a matter of urgent consideration, unemployment is one of continuing concern; and second, even if the motion were to succeed under the first heading, under paragraph 5 of the Standing Order there was an opportunity during the throne speech debate, which was recently concluded, and there will be an opportunity during opposition days to discuss this matter. Therefore, I do not feel that the matter ought to be given special consideration, pursuant to this rule.

● (1510)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—ALLEGED FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE FOR OPEN DISCUSSION ON FUTURE TRADE POLICY

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe) moved:

That this House urges the government to discontinue its propensity to act in secret and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, condemns its failure to provide for an open public discussion on future Canadian trade policy and to report to the Canadian people on its policy and progress respecting GATT negotiations now being carried on in Geneva and which will undoubtedly culminate in dramatic changes in world trade patterns.

Mr. Speaker: The House should note that in accordance with Standing Order 58(9)(a), not later than 9.45 this evening every question necessary to dispose of proceedings pursuant to this motion shall be put.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak on this motion I feel that I should first put today's debate into its proper context. I believe it is important that when we discuss the question of secrecy on the part of this government and the questions of trade, GATT and the International Monetary Fund, we must remember that there have been many worldwide meetings dealing with the important subject with which we are going to deal today. There have been many international meetings, particularly with respect to

[Mr. Speaker.]

the question of international trade and international monetary matters.

Hon. members will recall that there have been meetings in Geneva, Jamaica, Paris and Manila. There have been several meetings in Geneva and in Washington, and to date this government has never come to this House or to the people of Canada and clearly outlined exactly what transpires at these lofty international meetings to which we have become parties. I believe that what is being agreed to at many of these meetings is of great significance to Canadians. We in the House will be asked to respond to various legislative matters as a result of those agreements, and this government should give this House some explanation as to what it sees in the future for the Canadian trade position in the world. That is the reason we suggested this debate today.

Many speeches have been made decrying the tendency of this government to be secretive. Nowhere has that tendency shown more than on the tremendously significant questions of international monetary conditions and international trade. Just look at the disdain this government has for the House of Commons. Look at the benches opposite.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Stevens: Where is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald), who is in charge of GATT negotiations in Geneva at the present time?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Hiding somewhere.

Mr. Stevens: Where is the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien), who should be interested in this debate because it touches on trade?

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Out decentralizing some government department.

Mr. Stevens: Where are the various ministers who are not in attendance as we begin this debate? For some reason there is a strange contrast between what our neighbours, the Americans, do with respect to their trade negotiations and what we in Canada do with respect to our rather secretive approach. The fact is that before the United States enters into such things as the Geneva discussions with respect to amending the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, they secure an act of Congress setting out the parameters of the negotiations and exactly what the negotiators may and may not do.

With regard to the present negotiations which are under way in Geneva and which are generally referred to as the Tokyo Round, on January 3, 1975, the American Congress passed the trade act of 1974. Surely it is time the Canadian public became aware of the second last section of the American trade act of 1974. How many in this House, and how many Canadians realize that in section 612 of the American trade act, passed in anticipation of current negotiations in Geneva, the American Congress authorized the President of the United States to enter into a free trade agreement between Canada and the United States? For the record, let me record