

Employment Support Bill

• (5:30 p.m.)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT BILL**MEASURE TO MITIGATE EFFECT ON CANADIAN
INDUSTRY OF IMPOSITION OF FOREIGN IMPORT
SURTAXES**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-262, to support employment in Canada by mitigating the disruptive effect on Canadian industry of the imposition of foreign import surtaxes or other actions of a like effect, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs, and the amendment thereto of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert).

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I confess that the remarks of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) have prompted me to say a few words in this debate before the House reaches a decision on the motion before us. In doing so, I should like to make it clear that I believe the House should adopt the motion in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert).

The main argument used by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce seems to be this: We have power under scores and scores of acts to do what we want to do by Order in Council. Why change it? Why limit us?

Mr. Pepin: I did not say that.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The minister says he did not say that. He did not use those words, but that was the idea he was putting forward—that the government operates on the basis of areas of permission which are given to it by Order in Council. He does not need to tell us that—we know it. We know this is the way in which things are run around here. But one of the realizations which have been dawning on people lately is that maybe this power should be limited. This realization has come not only among members on this side of the House; there have been references to it on the government side.

I would remind the minister that earlier this session we passed Bill C-182, known as the Statutory Instruments Act. When that bill was before the House, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) made much of the desire of the government to involve Parliament more intimately in the details of legislation and in the approval of statutory instruments. This bill did, of course, provide for a special committee to be set up, and there is a motion on the order paper that a certain committee should be established on a permanent basis to review statutory instruments after they have been put into effect. But there was also in Bill C-182, clause 28(a) which reads in part as follows:

(1) In every act,

(a) the expression "subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament", when used in relation to any regulation, means that such regulation shall be laid before Parliament within 15 days after it is made or, if Parliament is not then sitting, on any of the first 15 days next thereafter that Parliament is sitting, and shall not come into force unless and until it is affirmed by the resolution of both Houses of Parliament, introduced and passed in accordance with the rules of both Houses—

I did not draft that; the hon. member for Edmonton West did not draft it. This is a piece of government legislation. The government placed its imprimatur on the idea that there are occasions when a regulation or Order in Council ought not to go into effect until there has been an affirmative resolution of the House of Commons. It is fine to hear this nice idea preached to us by the government. But when will the government begin to practise it? Is this something simply put in a book so we can be told it is there, or will it become of practical application?

There is a version of that provision right in Bill C-207, put there after a delay of some considerable time, regarding the establishment of ministries of state. At least there is recognition that there are certain things which the government cannot really do before coming back to Parliament and attaining affirmative approval. I could not stand here and say that this should apply to every last regulation involved in the processes of government; Parliament would be snowed under completely if that were the case. But, surely, if we are to rely at all on the good faith of a government which gave us the clause I read from Bill C-182, there must be some occasions when a matter is of such importance that it ought to come before Parliament before it is implemented.

If I were to say to the minister that every regulation or order should be anticipated by Parliament, he would probably say I was crazy, and he would be right. But I do say there are important things which should be handled in this way, and this is one of them. I would say that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, out of his desire to be known as a progressive type, should welcome the application of the principle which was written into Bill C-182 to his own legislation.

I think it was a good idea which was laid before the House this afternoon in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton West. We have had a good and useful debate, and I believe the government would be taking a correct step by accepting it.

Mr. Speaker: The House has heard the motion in the name of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert). All those in favour will please say aye.

Some hon. Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): On division.
Motion (Mr. Lambert, Edmonton West) negatived.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now proceed to consideration of motion No. 4, in the name of the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent), as follows:

That Bill C-262, an act to support employment in Canada by mitigating the disruptive effect on Canadian industry of the imposition of foreign import surtaxes or other actions of a like effect, be amended by adding the following immediately after line 7 at page 8:

"21. (1) The minister shall within fifteen days after the end of each month prepare a report on the amount of each grant, the levels of employment and production at the beginning and at the end of the assistance period at the plant and such report shall be