

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

had rejected a coalition with the New Democratic Party but now find that the coalition is back on.

Therefore, I wish to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 115 or 116 with respect to an allocation of time to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-130, an Act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the United States of America and, under the provisions of Standing Order 117, I give notice of my intention to move a time allocation motion at the next sitting of the House for the purpose of allocating a specified number of days for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at those stages of the Bill.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member for Windsor West rises on a point of order. If the Hon. Member is going to enter into a long argument, I have some doubt whether this is the appropriate time to do so. The Hon. Minister of State has given notice but what will happen after this is still, of course, speculation. I will hear the Hon. Member subject to my caveats.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me. I think I understand what you have in mind. You may feel that a point of order is more timely if and when a motion is actually moved. However, since what I have to say deals with the whole procedure for the use of Standing Order 117, I hope you will allow me at least to put briefly some points on the record. At any time that you feel I am going beyond what you think is acceptable, in at least a preliminary way, I know you will call me to order.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly do not want to restrict the Hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition from raising a point of order if he so wishes. At the moment, however, all the Chair has before it is a notice. If the Hon. Member for Windsor West feels there is some error in having heard the Minister or some error in the way the Minister has given the notice, I will hear him. However, I am anxious not to have arguments before the Chair which may well be premature. We have been through this before. I think that in at least one instance, if I can put this very gently, it may be that the wisdom of the Chair proved to be right in delaying an argument which ultimately did not have to take place.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): Mr. Speaker, I first want to say something about the notice itself which has supposedly just been given with respect to Standing Order 117. I understand that previously notice has always specified the precise number of days to which debate is to be limited. As I heard the Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, he simply indicated that pursuant to Standing Order 117 he was giving notice that a motion would be made to allocate time within which the remaining stage or stages of debate must take place. Therefore, I respectfully submit that the notice just given is defective and not what is required under Standing Order 117 because it

does not specify the precise number of days within which the Government wishes to limit debate.

● (1550)

Finally, it is my view on behalf of the Official Opposition that since it was possible for a majority of Parties in this House to reach an agreement with respect to allocation of time under Standing Order 116, the Government cannot proceed with a motion pursuant to Standing Order 117. I will reserve further comments on that point if and when the motion is argued.

I also want to point out that since some 77 amendments offered by the Official Opposition have been ruled by yourself to be in order, it cannot be said that the number of days referred to in the letter signed by myself and the New Democratic Party House Leader is an excessive number for the debate of 77 amendments.

Furthermore, contrary to the insinuation or innuendo of the Deputy Government House Leader, the letter itself bearing the signatures of myself and the House Leader of the New Democratic Party has been presented as it has to meet our understanding of the requirements of Standing Order 116. I find it deplorable that the Deputy Government House Leader, who has a mandate to uphold and take seriously the rules of this House, is reflecting in this way on a serious attempt to make use of Standing Order 116.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I want to add my comments to those of the House Leader of the Official Opposition. He indicated that the Deputy Government House Leader stated in his notice that he was referring to Standing Order 117, which states that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 115 or 116.

Standing Order 116 refers to a majority of the representatives of the several Parties coming to an agreement in respect of a proposed allotment of days or hours for the proceedings at any stage of the passing of a public Bill. That is exactly what we have done. There has been considerable consultation between the Opposition Parties. The feeling was that considering this is the most important trade deal in world history, if I recall the words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), it would not be inappropriate to set aside a further 150 days at report stage to deal effectively with all the concerns raised by the opposition amendments. Of course, another 200 days at third reading stage would enable us properly to flesh out the most important trade deal in world history.

After consultation between the two Opposition Parties, we have come to an agreement in terms of the appropriate allocated time to complete this debate.

Mr. Speaker: I listened carefully to Hon. Members. I just want to point out that at the moment the Chair's reading of Standing Order 116 is very clear:

When a Minister of the Crown, from his or her place in the House, states that a majority of the representatives of the several parties—