

Private Bills

contracts were signed two weeks after a session ended and the next session did not begin until six months later? What would be the worth of having such a clause in the bill? I leave it to the house to judge as to the necessity of such a measure. For myself, I do not even see any necessity of sending the bill to a committee for further study.

Mr. J. F. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, in rising to make a few remarks in connection with the bill I can only say that I was very surprised indeed to hear some of the comments made by the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Habel), and I understood him to say that the views he expressed were those of the official opposition. With the number of representations I have had from trade unions across the country and particularly from my own area urging that a policy of buying Canadian products should be followed in order that the members of these unions may be employed, it is certainly surprising to me to find the opposition taking this position.

Personally I do not have any great objection to United States firms. The principle I would follow is that the goods are manufactured in Canada and produced by Canadian workmen is the essential fact that we must consider. In view of some of the remarks made by the hon. member for Cochrane it would surely be a ridiculous position for the government to provide for winter works as it is doing and to make money available for sewage projects throughout the country if that money is going to go to the United States to provide employment in that country. That is what I understood the hon. member to say.

Mr. Habel: That is not what I said.

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): The hon. member will correct me if I am wrong. I understood him to say we should not worry about bringing in goods from the United States. I also find it surprising that he should have taken that attitude because preference for goods made at home is a policy that has been applied by many other countries. I wrote to the Canadian Manufacturers' Association some time ago regarding their program to encourage Canadians to buy products made in Canada in order that employment may be provided in this country. Here is one point they make in their reply:

I might note here that many other governments, notably Great Britain, Australia and, to a certain extent, the United States of America have seen fit to make domestic buying an instrument of national policy.

So that the very country to which the hon. member referred takes the attitude that

they should follow a policy of giving preference to purchases in their own country. I mentioned earlier the representations I have had from trade unions. I think we should perhaps give some consideration to an extension of the provisions of the bill and that when the federal government makes money available to municipalities or provincial governments they should see to it that the money goes to purchase goods made in Canada wherever possible. Money spent in this way involves a growing portion of our national financing. Much of the money spent by the federal government is spent in the form of grants to provincial and municipal governments to provide for various projects.

I can see some other benefits in the government pursuing such a policy at this time. It is true, as the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Broome) has said, that the general policy has been to buy Canadian products wherever possible but it has been left to individual departments of the government and in many instances purchasing agents are not as aware as they might be of the policy of the department. In the letter I have from the Canadian Manufacturers' Association there is this statement:

Many cabinet ministers have already expressed their desire that their departments follow the buy Canadian principle when buying. There have been many encouraging reports that their desires are being met.

I think the proposal that the government should give preference to Canadian products is only part of the whole problem because to be of real consequence the same policy has to be followed by everybody in the country. The only thing that can keep Canadians working is the production of goods in our manufacturing plants throughout the country and when these goods are produced they have to be sold. No one can expect people to buy goods if they are completely outrageous in price or of inferior quality, but generally speaking I do not think the people of Canada have realized the necessity of buying Canadian goods where possible.

When goods are of equal quality and equal in price I do not think that in many instances our people are conscious enough of buying Canadian products. In many cases this is perhaps brought about because of the advertising of United States products over and over again on television and in publications, a problem that the royal commission on publications is dealing with at the present time. People are familiar with the names of United States products and companies to a large extent. When our own products are equal in quality and equal in price, surely under these circumstances there should not