

Customs Tariff

I invite the Minister to bring forward a counter amendment which would give a definition of rule of origin which we could all support. That would probably be a very simple way of bringing this matter to a close.

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak against some of the aspects of Bill C-87 by supporting the amendment of my colleague, the Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy). The response of the Government to the amendment has been that we should trust the Prime Minister. According to all the evidence, 75 per cent of the Canadian people do not trust the Prime Minister, and I am happy to be counted among that 75 per cent.

I would like to explain this amendment and point out how it affects things which I have encountered during the last year. The clause which we are amending says:

For the purposes of this Act, goods originate in a country if the whole of the value of the goods is produced in that country.

That sounds reasonable. However, it then goes on to say the opposite. It says:

The Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) deeming goods, the whole or a portion of the value of which is produced outside a country, to originate in that country for the purposes of this Act—

In other words, the Governor in Council may secretly wipe out the essential meaning of Clause 15(1). He can say that an entire product made in country A will be considered to come from country X. We may think that that was just a funny joke if we did not know of certain things that are happening.

We know that the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) is rushing indecently to move this Bill through Parliament before he has even signed the free trade agreement which he is asking all Canadians to support. I was an observer last Thursday and Friday at the First Ministers meeting in Toronto. It was rather sickening to hear the Prime Minister pour scorn on anyone who was not prepared to buy an agreement which he himself has not yet seen fit to sign. It is not fit for him to sign, yet he condemns everyone who does not give it support in advance.

We do not have the exact text of the agreement. A few minutes ago the Minister said that we should not worry about this point, that the agreement will make it clear. Maybe it will make it clear, but we want to know how it will do that. Almost two months after the so-called agreement was reached we still do not have the text. We were told scornfully that 1,000 or 1,800 pages of the text will be tariff information. The implication was that we would either not want to read it or would not be able to understand it. Yet, that is exactly the sort of thing that is involved in this Bill which the Prime Minister is trying to rush through before he has to tell us the truth of the agreement which he will sign.

This Bill is part of the so-called free trade deal, the Prime Minister's deal with the President of the United States, which will not be free trade but fettered trade. It will not be free for Canada although it will be free for certain corporations, mainly American ones.

This morning I telephoned one of the major unions in Spadina, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. They are unaware of what the Government is planning to do to them through this Bill in combination with the free trade agreement. In other words, the Government is trying to sneak it through.

As has been pointed out before, there is what might be called a free trade or export zone in Mexico along the American border in which American corporations have established plants. American corporations are shutting down their plants in the United States where they might pay workers \$9 an hour. They are doing the work across the Mexican border where they pay workers 65 cents an hour and where there are no unions. As far as the companies and the Government are concerned, there never will be.

The deal is that the goods made in Mexico under slave labour conditions, for which the United States is responsible, are to be imported into Canada under the so-called free trade arrangement with the United States. That is what has clearly opened up in Clause 15 of the Bill. It is a disgrace.

• (1230)

A little over a year ago, one of the major clothing manufacturing plants in Spadina shut down suddenly, with one month's notice. It was a big plant employing 200 people, and was manufacturing Adidas basketball shorts on King Street. When I phoned the manager to ask why it had shut down, he gave me some vague talk about the market dropping. He did not say whether it was because their basketball shorts were no good or they oversold.

I learned from others that they had just opened a plant in Mexico to produce the very same Adidas basketball shorts. It is no wonder they wiped out 200 jobs in Toronto. That is the kind of deal which will become more popular with large corporations like Adidas if the Government is able to put Bill C-87 into law.

It is clearly intended to accelerate what is already being done in a few cases. It amounts to an attempt to legally smuggle goods that would not be acceptable if the deal were put before this Canadian Parliament and put openly to the Canadian people.

The Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) ducked in, made a wisecrack, then ducked out again. Of course, he did not want to be held responsible for his remark. He said that we are afraid of Mexico. I am not afraid of Mexico, but I have healthy respect for the power for multinational corporations like Adidas, General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. It is not Mexico against whom this amendment must be directed, even though we are forced to name Mexico; it is corporations like General Motors and Adidas who are exploiting Mexico and the Mexican people in order to damage the employment prospects of American and Canadian workers.