

Customs and Excise

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to, Bill read the second time and, by unanimous consent, referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

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CUSTOMS AND EXCISE OFFSHORE APPLICATION ACT

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): The Chair would like to be guided by the House. It was mentioned previously that some form of agreement might have been reached or that we would deal with it when we reach it, as stated earlier by the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard). Are there any special instructions from Members of the House of Commons?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I think it is fair to say that there have been some discussions with the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. MacLaren) with respect to what we consider to be a small but very important, indeed an extremely important, amendment to the schedule with respect to the application of the Act to fishing vessels, to include all fishing vessels in the schedule. I believe there is widespread support in all Parties with respect to an amendment to the schedule. I know the Minister of State for Finance has been canvassing this matter within his Department in terms of the policy which might be appropriate.

It would certainly be helpful if the Minister of State for Finance could address the question as to whether we could move to an amendment as suggested to him. I am sure he would find there would be unanimous consent with respect to whatever technicalities are required, whether it be by way of proceeding to a Ways and Means Motion, if that were necessary, or whatever authority is required to have the amendment made to the legislation.

It is this kind of co-operation for which we in the Official Opposition are well known. The House Leader will understand that we are trying to make Parliament work, as usual. If the Minister of State for Finance is prepared to consider this very constructive suggestion made by members of my Party with respect to an amendment, he will find that it will certainly facilitate the passage of this important legislation.

● (1610)

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the offer by the Hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition to allow Parliament to work better in the future than in the recent past. I thank him for his co-operation.

It is true that there was a clear understanding that if we were to agree to the kind of amendment referred to by the Hon. Member, we could dispose of the Bill through all stages

with one speaker per Party. It was not clear, if we were not to agree to the amendment, that there would not be one or two more speakers from the Official Opposition. For the time being I would prefer to let the Minister responsible deliver his speech on second reading. We would then have a better indication of what he intends to do. It is his decision. He may have good reason to agree or disagree. I therefore suggest that we start debate on second reading stage and then we will see what happens.

Mr. Skelly: Mr. Speaker, the position put forward by the House Leader for the Conservative Party is the wish of the entire House. Certainly I think it would be informative to the House to know where we are and how we are to prepare for this. It may be possible for the Minister to make a statement on the acceptability of the amendment. By putting the amendment forward we were led to believe—and it was confirmed by the Government House Leader—that the Bill could in fact be placed in danger. The largest part of the economy of shipbuilding in Canada will relate to offshore oil exploration among other things, so this is an extremely dangerous area. I wonder if the Minister might give an indication to the House whether he would be prepared to accept this very worth-while amendment and let us know prior to entering the debate whether we are preparing to pass the Bill through all stages—which we would very much like to do this afternoon—or whether procedural gamesmanship will put this very important piece of legislation beyond the reach of the House. We would like to see the Bill passed this afternoon with the amendment.

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make two clarifications with respect to the last intervention made by the Hon. Member. First, I would suggest that he speak with his House Leader. There was never any firm agreement that we would agree to the amendment. Therefore, there was a possibility that we would pass the Bill through all stages this afternoon, maybe with a few more speakers, and without the amendment. That was a possibility. There was no firm agreement to bring in the amendment. I was not able to give that commitment.

Second, he is seeking a statement by the Minister. That is exactly what I just indicated the Minister would do when he started debate on second reading.

Hon. Roy MacLaren (Minister of State (Finance)) moved that Bill C-16, an Act to apply the customs and excise jurisdiction of Canada to the continental shelf of Canada and to amend certain Acts in relation thereto or in consequence thereof, be read the second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will address the question which the House Leader for the Official Opposition raised, but first I should like to deal with the substance of the Bill itself. It is legislation which will fill a vacuum in Canadian law and will have significant positive effects on the ability of Canadian manufacturers to compete on fair and equitable terms in supplying goods used in the exploration and development of Canada's offshore petroleum reserves.