

*Customs Tariff*

bring before this House the amendments to implement these GATT tariff changes. Will it be in his budget, will it be later, and if so, how much later? I think it is essential that these changes in our tariff to implement the GATT agreement be brought forward as soon as possible. It is clear some industries will have to make very substantial adjustments in order to cope with these changes. I recognize they are to be staged in over a period of up to eight years.

The process of parliamentary consideration of these changes should begin as soon as possible. As part of this process, it is absolutely essential that this government presents to the House, at the same time as it presents the measures to adopt the changes arising out of the GATT tariff negotiations, measures of adjustment assistance, measures to assist not just the industry affected by tariff changes but also the workers in that industry to cope with the effects of these changes.

It is essential that these measures of adjustment assistance not only provide for financial assistance to industries in order to help them retool, re-equip and perhaps even change their main line of endeavour to one degree or another, but also that there be to no lesser extent measures to help workers who may have to be laid off for a period of time and to help workers be retrained to meet new opportunities.

All too often when we consider measures of adjustment assistance in order to enable our industry to cope with changes in economic conditions arising out of tariff negotiations, we do not begin by giving attention to the obligation to take into account the burden of this adjustment on workers, as much as the burden that exists for industry. It is essential for the minister in winding up this debate or in Committee of the Whole to let us know when he is going to be introducing measures to implement the agreements arising out of the last GATT negotiations. Equally important is that there be adjustment assistance programs which will be available to no less extent to workers as to the industries affected by these tariff changes.

I also want to propose to the minister in this connection that the precedent set during the parliamentary consideration of the results of the last GATT tariff negotiations some ten years ago be followed on this occasion. At that time the House agreed to send the subject matter of the bill to adopt the results of the GATT negotiations to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs so that there could be public hearings. During those hearings members of the committee could question not only the minister and his officials, but could also hear from representatives of the industries and workers affected by these tariff changes.

Actually it would be a very good reform of the proceedings of this House if, when it comes to consideration of changes in our tax laws, whether they be changes in our income tax laws, customs or sales tax laws, detailed consideration be carried out, not in Committee of the Whole, but in the appropriate standing committee of the House. We could hear directly from the people affected by those proposed tax changes, we could hear the views of experts outside the government sector and we could question directly not just the minister but also the

officials who are advising him. We could do that to some extent at least. When just about every other bill is studied in a standing committee, the only exception being bills to implement a budget, one would think that this is really just a backwards way of going about the proper consideration of parliamentary business. If there was any bill which deserved attention in a standing committee rather than in Committee of the Whole—this House pretending to be a committee—it would be a bill to implement changes in our tax law.

● (1610)

In conclusion, I want again to say that it is not the intention of the official opposition to prolong unduly debate on this bill since it is to implement changes in the Customs tariff arising out of a ways and means motion presented before the last election. In Committee of the Whole we will be asking specific questions about the details of the bill.

In particular, we will be seeking further explanations not suitable to be given during second reading as to exactly how this bill differs from the ways and means motion presented before the election. However, our essential objective is to provide every opportunity for this government to present its own budget as soon as possible so that we can again demonstrate to the people of Canada that, despite what the Conservatives said during the past election campaign, they have no new or better ideas when it comes to dealing effectively with the problems of this country.

**Mr. Bob Rae (Broadview-Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, it was with some reluctance that I agreed to lead off for my party on this measure since it is not a subject of which I have a great deal of personal knowledge but, having listened to the other two speeches, somehow my fears have dissolved in the face of experience.

There are a number of questions which we can raise concerning the Customs tariff. I am sorry the minister has decided to leave just as I have some questions to put to him.

Quite apart from these measures themselves, I think the general position of the government with respect to trade is unclear. I need only point out to the minister what I take to be two conflicting statements he has made over the past four or five months. The first statement with respect to trade and the objectives of the government was that the minister thought it would be a good idea if we had an active debate on free trade. The indication from the quotations which were widely publicized at the time is that the minister himself was personally leaning toward free trade with the United States as an alternative for Canada and as the direction in which we should be moving.

The second statement the minister made was in the House, and he indicated that quite to the contrary, he was now concerned about our pattern of trade with the United States and with the rest of the world. He was sufficiently concerned that he was looking at a range of policies which would give a greater amount of national independence to Canada, because he seemed to accept the argument which we had been making