

*Customs Act*

There is a point of overriding concern that was made by the union of the Canadian Customs inspectors in its presentation to the committee and that point referred to the pilot project which was ongoing in Montreal. It concerns the need for the Government to keep in mind that in order to carry out legislation such as this, we may require more public servants so that the Bill may work the way it is supposed to work. Estimates have been made concerning the need for an increased staff in the Customs Department. According to union representations, staff should be increased by about 15 per cent while the pilot projects that were undertaken indicate that an increase of about 20 per cent in the workforce is needed.

In passing this Bill, which was amended at committee and agreed to by all of those who made representations, the Government must now keep in mind that it has an obligation to reverse the trend which was announced by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) of cut-backs within the Department of National Revenue. It is fine to pass the legislation which tells the Customs Department that it will do this, that and the other thing, but if the Department does not have the employees to carry these things out, there is no sense in passing the Bill.

With that one reservation and a warning to the President of the Treasury Board, the Bill should pass. The statement made by the President of the Treasury Board in November certainly has to be re-examined as does the statement made by the Minister of Finance in his Budget. To carry out what is described in this Bill as being necessary for the protection of the Canadian public as it relates to the possible mailing of drugs will require additional personnel to enforce.

I feel certain that if the Bill had been passed under the previous administration, we would have had no problem whatsoever with increasing the staff of Customs by 20 per cent so that it could carry out the requirements of this Bill. However, the Customs Department is being held down by the statements of the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance. I am sure that the Minister who is now responsible for the Department of National Revenue will be making the necessary representations in Cabinet and I am sure that the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board will see the light and at least assign more personnel to the Department so that the provisions of this Bill can be properly carried out as is the desire of Parliament.

**Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain):** Mr. Speaker, much if not all of the work on this Bill has already been done. We are now making some final comments with regard to loose ends that may need to be tied up. I recognize that the Bill in itself is so technical that it would be virtually impossible to have a reasoned debate at this time. I do not propose to attempt to address those technical questions.

It is always a pleasure to listen to the Hon. Member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Baker). I know that he has had a long and abiding interest in the matter of customs tariffs and has made an in-depth study of it. Having done that, he has accepted much of what is contained in the Bill perhaps,

because it was originally introduced by a Government of which he was a member but probably because he understands the necessity to pull together in one concise statute all the things that have occurred and the directions the Government has been taking over the last number of years. However, the point that was made, one I wanted to make myself, regarding the submission of the Customs and Excise Union and the Public Service Alliance of Canada is an important one and should be reinforced. I feel confident that the Minister, although he has not moved to correct at least two of the points in the submission, will do so over the course of the next few months.

● (1210)

On the whole question of the reduction in manpower, the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) indicated some time ago that it was the Government's intention to reduce the total number of person-years in this field. While I do not think anyone would deny that where there is evidence of an over-abundance of manpower an effort should be made to trim it to a size necessary to meet requirements, the problem that seems to arise as a result of this legislation and the implementation, particularly of the pilot project in Montreal, leads to the conclusion that more manpower rather than less will be required. The reduction by the year 1990 or 1992 of about 25 per cent of the number of persons employed, when weighed against what appears to be an increased workload as a result of this legislation, just does not seem to make much sense. I certainly have difficulty understanding the rationale. Whether he responds today or takes it under advisement and reviews it over a period of time to determine whether or not the statistical information is in keeping with the facts gained by experience, it is essential that the Minister or the Ministry has a watching brief on whether or not we are overburdening the existing employees in this area of his responsibility.

The difficulty which will arise will be as follows. Employees can only do so much. We are moving to an honour system in certain areas. Human nature being what it is, there will be a tendency for people perhaps to attempt to avoid payment of the necessary tariffs voluntarily. That will result in one of two things. There will be a reduction of revenue; it was suggested, for example, in the brief I mentioned, that the uncollected revenue in Montreal as a result of the pilot project could approximate \$100,000 per month. If that were true and one extrapolates that over an extended period of time, it is not difficult to see where the Government could lose many millions of dollars. It may not turn out that way. I am prepared to concede that this is possible. However, I think we have to be sure that careful scrutiny is maintained to guarantee that in an honour system such as this the moneys owed are collected.

I believe the Minister is aware that in Winnipeg, but it might have been someplace else, there was a sort of honour system concerning the payment of traffic violation fines. The end result, of course, was that they had to go back to an enforcement process. Going back is always more difficult than leaving something in place. I think the Minister appreciates that. What we are saying is this. It would appear that, with the reduction in the number of person-years, inevitably there will