

Customs Tariff

harmonized under the new scheme as of January 1, 1988. It appears that the Americans intend to bring in their harmonized system in conjunction with the omnibus trade Bill. You may recall that the Americans have now cooled off on some of the protectionist elements of that. They have perhaps cooled off because of the threat by President Reagan that he intends to veto the omnibus Bill and, therefore, legislation is apparently to be introduced separately by a member of Congress.

• (1650)

That legislation, at last report of just a few days ago, has not yet been introduced. As you know, Congress is taken up this week by the visit of Secretary Gorbachev of the Soviet Union. There is absolutely no certainty that the Americans will deal with this legislation prior to January 1. They too, of course, are also about to come up into their Christmas break.

Canada will harmonize with an American system that will not be harmonized. In Bill C-87, the Government will have the power to allow the Cabinet, at the stroke of a pen by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), to sign \$2 billion worth of tariff cuts with the United States without any further reference to Parliament.

I want to talk a bit about that because to allow that kind of latitude in making decisions about Canada's tariff structure without reference to Parliament is wrong.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I say there is no justification for the Government of this country to have the power to cut Canadian tariffs on goods from the United States to the tune of \$2 billion, without any reference to Parliament. The Minister of State (Finance) informed me I had no grounds to raise this question. Mr. Speaker, I read Clause 62 three times, and it is crystal clear the Government has the power to reduce tariffs on goods from the United States by way of compensation as defined by the Government, without any reference to Parliament.

[English]

As I said, the Government does not have a mandate for that. The Government is taking this action despite the fact that it does not have support in the polls. The Government is taking this action despite the fact that half the country opposes it. The Government is taking this action despite the clear opposition from the Premier of the largest province who has a mandate from the last election in Ontario when he won a rather overwhelming majority.

The Prime Minister has emerged from the First Ministers' Conference on the economy just the other day indicating that he had a consensus, that there was an emerging consensus. But the consensus of which he speaks consists of the support of four or five provinces, no more, and those provinces in turn have not had a mandate from their citizens. I know that in Quebec, for example—

[Translation]

there is a coalition against free trade supported by all kinds of grass roots groups and by all the major unions in the Province of Quebec, with strong support from the *Union des producteurs agricoles* which represents 42,000 Quebec farmers. At its convention the other day in Quebec City, the UPA declared it was totally opposed to the Bill proposing these tariff reductions and the proposed Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

[English]

I would also point out that two of the provinces, which are part of the so-called consensus which has been raised by the Prime Minister, are in fact provinces where their leaders claim and purport to speak for their populations, yet the opinion polls indicate that they do not do so. Quite the contrary. Mr. Devine in Saskatchewan is far behind the New Democrats and Roy Romanow in popular support. Mr. Vander Zalm in British Columbia is in the same position. We had an example in the House of Commons today. Mr. Vander Zalm is supporting a measure of free trade with the United States despite the fact that the Government, behind closed doors, has just negotiated protection for the East Coast fisheries to ensure that processing would take place on the East Coast and that raw fish could not be exported from there, but the same protection is not given to the equally important fishery on the West Coast.

I find myself also at a loss to comment on Bill C-87 because the powers it gives relate to a very substantial reduction in tariffs and relate to certain tariffs being eliminated effective in one year from January 1, 1988. They also relate to other tariffs being eliminated at a very rapid rate over five years. Since the text of the agreement has not been released and the details of the tariff cuts have not been released, I have not had an opportunity to talk to my constituents to find out what their reaction would be. I suppose, since we are being asked to look at the harmonized tariff schedules part of this Bill, that I could comment in some detail on what is being done, except that I have not seen the detail and it is impossible for me to comment in any knowledgeable way.

If I can go on I would like to talk in more general terms about what all this means. The Government has demonstrated through a number of different actions that it is not a Government which is credible to average Canadians. It is not a Government which can be trusted by average Canadians, whether on pensions, the tuna deal or now on the outrageous behaviour of the Hon. Member for York—Peel (Mr. Stevens), by refusing to take appropriate action after the report by Mr. Justice Parker. This Government has lost the trust of Canadians. Yet when it comes to the question of tariff cuts which it can take by the powers of Bill C-87, the Government is simply saying, "Trust us and we will do the right thing". When they say "the right thing", Mr. Speaker, it is becoming clear to me that "the right thing" is those things that are demanded by the political right.