

has shown, I think, that there is unanimity in all quarters of the House that the motion should be carried and that the treaty should be ratified, as one which will be to the advantage of our country; may even carry with it some political, as well as economic, advantages.

The question of the background of the negotiation of this treaty has been raised. The negotiation of the treaty goes back to last autumn, when an invitation was extended to me to visit the Soviet union. I was asked at that time what I would like to see and what subjects I would like to discuss with representatives of the Government in Moscow. After consultation with my colleagues, it was suggested to the authorities in Moscow that one of the subjects would be the development of trade between our two countries. For that purpose an official of the Department of Trade and Commerce accompanied me to Moscow. Possibly I can add at this time my tribute to that which has been paid by others to the excellent work done by that official, the Associate Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce, and other officials of that Department and other Departments of Government, including External Affairs, who were concerned with this matter.

No Strategic Materials

These preliminary discussions in Moscow made it clear that there was a reasonable possibility of negotiating a mutually advantageous treaty between the two countries. We made it clear in Moscow, before the negotiations were referred back to Ottawa, that there could be no inclusion of materials on our strategic list in any trade negotiations and, on the other hand, that we would expect a commitment from the Soviet Government for the purchase of wheat. It was also made clear in Moscow that the negotiations should be resumed in Ottawa and brought to a conclusion, if possible, here. As the House knows, that was done.

The Soviet Government sent a team of trade experts to Ottawa where there was quite a serious and indeed at times difficult negotiation of details of an agreement, with eventual success. It was found by those on our side that those who were representing the Soviet union were competent, straightforward and frank negotiators and, as has been mentioned already this afternoon, personally very agreeable people to deal with. I think we can take satisfaction that the negotiations have resulted in the treaty which is now before the House.

There were difficulties, of course, as would be natural and, indeed, inevitable when negotiations are taking place between representatives of countries which are so different economically, politically and in every other way as those of the Soviet Union and Canada. Some of these difficulties were honest ones arising out of misunderstandings of constitutional procedures. For instance, we are today asking the House of Commons to approve ratification of this treaty. In Soviet practice no such approval is, of course, required and, indeed, legally and constitutionally under our own system no such approval is required because ratification is an Executive act. It was hard to make the Soviet representatives understand that while legally the executive could ratify and the agreement could go into effect at once, it was our constitutional practice—and a very good practice it is—that no international treaty or agreement of any significance at all, whether political or economic, should be ratified by the Executive without the approval of the Legislature.

This particular agreement is substantially the same as those which we have in the field of trade and commerce with most other countries. For instance, for some years we have had most favoured nation treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia. It is true that these arrangements were made before the communist