

Employment Support Bill

[English]

• (3:10 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT BILL****MEASURE TO MITIGATE EFFECT ON CANADIAN INDUSTRY OF IMPOSITION OF FOREIGN IMPORT SURTAXES**

The House resumed, from Tuesday, September 7, consideration of the motion of Mr. Pepin that Bill C-262, to support employment in Canada by mitigating the disruptive effect on Canadian industry of the imposition of foreign import surtaxes or other actions of a like effect, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Max Saltsman (Waterloo): In the course of some remarks I made before adjournment last night, Mr. Speaker, I called upon the government to indicate to the United States that it is prepared to advocate some tough measures against the continuing American protectionism. It is very difficult for us on this side, my party, to understand why this government is so afraid to spell out a position in the face of the trade war that has been started by the United States. The Minister of Finance, (Mr. Benson) in his speech yesterday, referred in vague terms to other measures that he had in mind. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that the minister is absolutely contemptuous of this House when he does not tell us what sort of things the government has in mind. Certainly the bill before us, the measure that we are debating at this moment, offers almost no hope or no satisfaction in face of the problem.

It is difficult to understand of what this government is afraid. We in Canada are in one of the best positions of any nation to maintain an independent economy. We have raw materials, we have an educated population, we have all the things that any nation could hope to have, but despite all these advantages we suffer from a government that is frightened out of its wits—if it has any wits. It does not seem to have any idea how to handle the present situation. In the light of history perhaps we should not expect anything more from a Liberal government, because the present state of uncertainty and the absence of any independent trade position flows from the fact that the Liberal party has always relied on the United States to solve Canada's problems. They have no policy and they never had a policy. From the early days of reciprocity, the Liberals always took the position that if things were all right in the United States they would be all right in Canada. This is the only position they have. It is not a position that makes any sense. It did not make any sense then and it certainly does not make any sense today.

It is humiliating beyond belief to think that a great country like Canada does not have a position of its own but has to lean like a cripple on the strength of some other nation for its prosperity. We deserve much better than that. We deserve better than that from our politicians and from that particular government. History

[Mr. Trudeau.]

seems to indicate that Canada has always needed some sort of kick, if you will, to get it going. It was only after the failure of reciprocity in the early days of our history, and only after the breakdown of negotiations with the United States that we started to develop some semblance of national policies. The record is quite good. When we did develop those policies they proved to be effective. In times of war when we were very largely on our own and had to develop policies, we performed marvels of production and performed magnificently in the challenges of those times. At those times governments had to respond. We must realize that we are once more in this kind of crisis position. The time has passed when our governments can literally go begging to the United States and ask that country to save us by policies designed in the United States. To me, the government's behaviour represents a kind of cowardice that is camouflaged by statements such as "free trade", and, "do not start a trade war", as well as statements about the quiet diplomacy that this government seems so proud of but that has proven totally ineffective. Finally, we hear exhortations to be good neighbours, as though we do not want to be good neighbours.

Let me ask, where in the world is this free trade that they talk about today? We played our role during the Kennedy Round. We went a considerable distance in removing restrictions to trade. We had great hopes that those negotiations would result in the freeing of trade round the world. As we look today at what happened, what degree of satisfaction can we take from our position. The world, rather than becoming more inclined to accepting free trade, more inclined to accepting openness, has become restrictive in the extreme. We see this exemplified in countries like Japan, which has developed a very tight and controlled import policy. We also see this in the European Economic Community group of nations which tends to exclude imports from the other countries of the world. We can also see this in the response of the greatest protectionist country of all, the United States.

Let us make no mistake. The U.S. has been protectionist in the past and is again moving rapidly towards protectionism now. The only commodities they are willing to allow in are those they need badly because they no longer have them in abundance and because, without them, certain of their costs would be too high. The whole appeal for free trade is spurious. We are not moving in that direction. We may be the only people in the world who believe that free trade exists at this time or that there is any hope for it. The traditional position of the NDP, the group I am proud to be a member of and of the CCF which came before us, has always been in favour of free trade and for an international easing of restrictions. We still think that way today. There is nothing we want more than to see restrictions to trade removed. We must also be realistic and be aware of problems facing this nation. You do not help the world and you do not help yourself by closing your eyes to what is going on. All of us in this House have a responsibility to see that our ideals are matched by actions which will defend the interests of this nation. While working toward the objectives of international trade and communication, we must