

*Customs Tariff*

devices designed for the handicapped. They will also recall that this committee, which was presided over by the hon. member for Don Valley East (Mr. Smith), recommended these changes in recommendations 49 and 50 of its report "Obstacles", if I am not mistaken.

The Customs tariff already provides for duty-free entry of most goods designed for the use of disabled persons that are not available from Canadian sources.

The Canadian tariff policy in that area has always been to exempt from duty new products designed for the use of disabled persons if unavailable from Canadian producers. However, the exemption process is relatively slow, since new products designed for the use of disabled persons are usually subject to duty as long as no provision is made in a budget for their duty-free entry. In order to reduce the impact of that delay and also to grant applications for tariff duty reduction in respect of such goods, as pointed out in the report "Obstacles", the bill proposes to establish a new tariff item under which the governor in council would be empowered to designate for duty-free entry particular groups of goods specially designed for the use of disabled persons. This procedure would make for a more flexible and faster tariff treatment of equipment intended for the disabled.

I would like to point out that such equipment will be designated for duty-free entry only when similar products are not available from Canadian producers. The bill also proposes the duty-free entry of electronic devices that are designed to help people with speech problems, and also control equipment designed to enable disabled persons to energize and control various household, industrial and office equipment.

Another aspect of the bill concerns dental goods that are used either by dentists or by technicians preparing prostheses for use by dentists. The legislation therefore establishes a new list of dental goods that now groups in one place in the Customs Tariff all dental goods used by dentists and dental laboratories.

Under this change, a number of goods that are not made in Canada and are not likely to be will be exempted, while reductions in tariffs will apply to another range of goods to be used by dentists or dental technicians. This measure follows from representations made by both dental goods manufacturers and dentists as well as Members of Parliament, following changes made in the Customs Tariff in the October 28, 1980, budget. It will be remembered that during the debate on Bill C-50 at that time, representations had been made in this House, in committee and in the other place in respect of those imported dental goods.

Those provisions excluded certain dental goods from the duty-free entry provisions of tariff item 47810-1. I would emphasize that the impact of such changes will not be significant, since the cost of materials used by dentists in reconstructive surgery constitutes a fraction of the over-all cost of dental care. However, the proposed changes will allow dentists and

dental laboratories to control their costs, will simplify customs clearance, as well as reduce the unavoidable paper burden.

Now I should like to mention some of the aspects of other tariff amendments. The bill eliminates the tariffs on a number of products such as unexposed instant films for hospitals, certain components for radio operators, and religious printed matter. Before we proceeded with second reading of the bill, the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) raised a point of order about the New Zealand-Canada trade agreement which I tabled in the House a few minutes ago with unanimous consent. With respect to that New Zealand-Canada trade agreement, most of the tariff amendments related to its renewal are of a technical nature and will have little or no appreciable effect on the general tariff policy. As I said earlier, the new agreement signed by Canada and New Zealand replaces the 1932 New Zealand-Canada trade agreement. Under this new agreement, the special tariff rates granted to New Zealand—and I say that again for the benefit of the hon. member who stood offended a moment ago and who had not read the bill—under the terms of the former agreement are maintained and presented in the Customs Tariff under a new form. The original provisions concerning products imported from New Zealand are changed so as to make sure that only those products which are made almost entirely in New Zealand will benefit from the preferential tariff.

With respect to metric conversion, hon. members know that a good many of the provisions of the Customs tariff involve imperial measures. The bill will grant the governor in council the authority to convert those measures to metric by way of orders in council. This will enable the government to begin the conversion of the Customs tariff to the metric system in an orderly and systematic manner, and especially to give priority in this conversion process to the industrial sectors where metric measurements are already in use, particularly the textile industry. The legislative provisions of the bill have been drafted with great care so as to limit the authority to strictly technical conversions and to avoid causing an administrative nightmare. We will endeavour instead to iron out the difficulties for those industries which are already using the metric system. That is meaningless for the hon. member who does not know anything, but it is an urgent measure for those people who conduct their businesses in metric measurements. A few technical tariff changes are also brought about in the Customs tariff. One relates to canned fish and is aimed at reinstating the tariff rates which were in force prior to an amendment to the interpretation of the tariff; other changes are designed to improve the tariff nomenclature so as to make its application easier. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the amendments to the Customs Tariff proposed in this bill will benefit handicapped people, consumers, importers and, of course, Canadian manufacturers.

The improvements to the GPT, particularly those related to imports from underprivileged nations, reaffirm Canada's com-