

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

House that for the balance of the day the House will continue consideration of third reading of Bill C-2, the legislation to enact to Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States.

The Opposition has quite properly stated its intention to prolong debate at third reading. Therefore, I give notice that at the next sitting of the House, immediately before the Order of the Day is called for resuming debate on the motion standing in the name of the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) for third reading of Bill C-2, an Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States of America, and on any amendments proposed thereto, I will move that the debate shall not be further adjourned.

Tomorrow we will proceed with the motion of closure and complete debate at third reading of Bill C-2, probably at one o'clock a.m. Saturday, December 24.

During Motions under Routine Proceedings tomorrow, after discussion with my colleagues opposite, we will propose a motion without debate, the effect of which will be to adjourn the House to the call of the Chair for the purpose of receiving a Message from the Senate respecting the giving of Royal Assent to the said Bill, and that immediately following Royal Assent on the said Bill a motion to rescind the Order of the House of December 16, 1988, respecting sitting hours shall be deemed to have been moved by a Minister of the Crown, and the Speaker shall forthwith deem such motion adopted, in keeping with the undertaking we gave during debate, and shall adjourn the House for a reasonable time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADA-UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Crosbie that Bill C-2, an Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States of America, be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): When the House rose at one o'clock, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Axworthy) had the floor.

• (1510)

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Government has just brought in another motion of closure. The Deputy House Leader in his former life must have been a doorman in a steam bath. He is using closure so often, he does nothing but close the doors and not open them.

One of the initial casualties of this agreement has been the rights and obligations of this Government to act as the trustee and guardian of parliamentary procedures. This has been thrown to tatters and shovelled into the dustbin of history. Other precedents have been established in the last week and a half that will substantially distort future proceedings of this House for many generations to come. We regret that the haste and indecency with which the Government has proceeded upon this legislation has forced it to use these measures.

I keep coming back to the question that many Canadians have, "What was the point of these measures? What was the motivation that prompted this intense, unfeeling and insensitive distortion of the parliamentary system?" We were told it was because the Opposition would stop it all. There was a paranoia on the other side that there would be a wholesale onslaught from the trenches. The Government never gave us a chance to present the amendments we wanted to present so that it could see there was nothing in those amendments that was designed to contradict the agreement but simply to improve it. We recognize that there is a majority. We are not subject to any illusion, but we felt there were deep concerns on the part of many Canadians that had to be answered. We constructed amendments in that light. If the Government had given us a chance, followed the normal procedure and opened up report stage so we could have had the opportunity to table those amendments, it would have seen that the whole intent and purpose was not to obstruct but to improve.

I want to indicate to the House, the Government and Canadians what they are missing. This could have been a much improved piece of legislation without doing any damage to its intent.

Where do we begin? We begin with an amendment that called for the establishment of a special committee of the House that would have the responsibility of examining the implementation of the Bill. It would provide a forum for Canadians to come forward and make their concerns heard. It would lay before the House an annual report as to the effectiveness of that