

Customs Tariff

production in Mexico and have been prepared to do it in a variety of ways by relaxing tough foreign ownership rules or relaxing the rules of company ownership establishing free trade zones, it becomes critical that we know whether these products will be competing directly with products now made in Canada. Unless this amendment is included, Canadian industry will be at the mercy of the free trade agreement, whatever it will provide when it comes out. The link is obvious.

The decision of the Government to hoist the obscenity legislation and bring Bill C-87 before us before the fine print is available can only make us very suspicious. I urge government Members, and particularly those who come from areas of Canada where automotive production takes place, to insist on this amendment.

● (1210)

Mr. Nickerson: Mr. Speaker, it is well known that the Liberals and the NDP, those opposite, are a pretty timorous bunch. However, today we have witnessed the spectacle of them quaking in their collective boots and trembling in fear before the economic might, not of Japan, West Germany or the United States, but of tiny little Mexico. Wee timorous beasts they certainly are.

Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap): Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the Hon. Member for Western Arctic (Mr. Nickerson) would have participated in this debate as opposed to simply making an interjection. After all, it has become perfectly clear this morning that while Canadians have been requesting an opportunity to participate in a debate on free trade through their elected representatives, such has not been the case, with the exception of opportunities provided by opposition days.

On the most important trade deal in Canadian history, and as the chief trade negotiator, Simon Reisman, indicated, the most important trade deal in the world, the Government has not seen fit to set aside any parliamentary time for debate. Canadians are expected to buy a pig in a poke. They are expected to have faith that the Government will introduce legislation that is in the best interests of the people of Canada.

I think it is rather sad that today, when the Government has provided an opportunity for government Members to debate Bill C-87, no one on the government side seems to be interested. So far, we have heard almost exclusively from members of the Opposition. This is unfortunate, but I suspect that it may be—

Mr. Cassidy: Deliberate.

Mr. Riis: I would not like to think it is a deliberate move on the Government's part not to participate in a debate on free trade but that it simply stems from the fact that those who would participate are busy at committee meetings and will be here later today. We will be awaiting their return and are anxious to hear their comments on the free trade debate.

We are now debating the first amendment put forward by my hon. friend from Ottawa Centre. I believe that this amendment is absolutely necessary. As Hon. Members know, Bill C-87 which the Government wants to pass as quickly as possible really provides that goods produced in another country can be deemed to be produced in the United States and therefore, under a free trade deal, could be traded as American products in Canada without any duties or tariffs. More specifically, if the United States, in a free trade zone with Mexico, were prepared to use very cheap Mexican labour to produce goods at an extremely low cost in Mexico or along the border, those goods could be deemed to be American products, which would then be allowed into Canada duty-free to compete with our products here in Canada in a so-called free and fair trade situation, though obviously such would not be the case. These goods, which would not even have been produced in the United States, would be considered to be American in origin.

We are interested in having a fair trade situation with the United States. We feel that if we are to be trading in a head-to-head way, the situations on both sides of the border ought to be the same. Both countries ought to have the same input costs, and then whichever country is the most productive or the most sophisticated in terms of marketing would probably come up with the sales.

My hon. friend from Ottawa Centre has moved an amendment that reads as follows:

That Bill C-87, be amended in Clause 15 by adding, immediately after line 26 at page 4, the following:

"(3) Notwithstanding any regulation made under subsection (2), goods wholly or partly produced in Mexico shall not be deemed to originate in the United States."

That is about the purest form of an amendment that I have ever seen in the House of Commons. I would think it would get the unanimous support of all Hon. Members. If we do not support it, we are saying that goods produced wholly or partly in Mexico shall be deemed to originate in the United States. We are simply trying to clarify the situation so that if the Government proceeds to bulldoze ahead and jam the free trade deal down the throats of Canadians, we will agree that goods produced in the United States must be produced in the United States.

As many people have warned us, we will find that goods produced in Mexico will be deemed to have been produced in the United States and then will be traded into Canada as American products. That is wrong, unjust and unfair. It is an unfair trading practice. We are simply saying that it should not be allowed. I think any fair-minded person would agree with that.

It seems to be rather odd that opposition Members would even have to suggest such an amendment. It would seem to be in the best interests of Canada and Canadian manufacturers that the Government itself would put this in the legislation. Such, apparently, is not the case.