

Customs Tariff

normal channel they are subject to a duty of 17½ per cent under item 7-1100-1.

This particular item is the item under which all articles not listed elsewhere in the customs tariff are placed. If there is something which is not covered and it is felt the government should get something out of it, it goes into this category and is subject to a duty of 17½ per cent. There is no sales tax imposed in that case, but sometimes these pharmaceutical products enter the country through the post.

I myself find it strange that drugs, as a class of goods, should be permitted to enter Canada for collection by an individual without a doctor's prescription in his hand. But that is another matter and outside the range of today's debate, although I do feel that drugs should be importable either by a pharmacist, by a hospital or similar institution, or by a doctor, but not by a patient because, by permitting this, we are inviting people to bring in drugs in another way. Be that as it may, when these products are brought in through the mail they are sometimes subject to a duty of a different type because the man at the post office is not as familiar with the various schedules as the customs officer would be. So a duty of 10 per cent is imposed, plus a 12 per cent sales tax. The increase in cost in that case is of the order of 23 per cent. We should bear in mind that an M.S. victim is not readily employable and this megavitamin treatment may be costing as much as \$115 a month. We could lighten this load if we were prepared to invent a classification—I would be prepared to produce a number for it if the question were in front of me—and say that entry would be “free—free—free.”

One cautionary word. I believe there is division in the medical profession as to the curative power of megavitamins. Some doctors say this treatment is a cure, others say it is a palliative, or that the cure, if one is achieved, takes place in the mind of the receiver. That is an aspect with which I am not competent to deal. I do say that those who have found a cure and believe it to be due to the megavitamins they have taken, feel obliged to continue the treatment all their lives. So when a person has to pay an extra \$35 to \$250 a month for his treatment it is time we took steps to remove the customs duty from that item. It is not a matter of saying: well, they can always claim it under the pharmacare program. I have already dealt with that aspect. But that is not the point. The public should not have to pay this extra 17½ per cent or 23 per cent, depending upon the calculation used, just because it all comes out of the funds to which we all contribute.

● (1632)

I do not know whether it is the Department of Finance or the Department of National Revenue which determines what goes in and what comes out of the customs tariff schedule, but it is time to move toward dealing with this particular matter. Those people believe they have found a cure for multiple sclerosis by massive doses of megavitamins. Whether that medication is in the form of pills or capsules to be taken orally, or whether it is necessary to administer injections, does not matter. They believe a cure has been found, and they should

[Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich).]

not be subjected to the 17.5 per cent customs duty. I should like to see a change made in that area. Perhaps we could receive an amendment during committee of the whole.

I hope some of my colleagues will speak in due course about the fruit and vegetable situation, as well as the need for regional and seasonal adjustments in tariffs to assist the small Canadian fruit producer. On the first day of spring for the past five or six years, I have managed to receive daffodils from my constituency which I made available to all hon. members. I have not done that only to boast about the west coast and its weather. The daffodils are a symbol of something more than the early arrival of spring on the west coast. They are a symbol of the season for fruits and vegetables maturing earlier in the west than elsewhere in Canada.

I cannot see why there should not be a tariff imposition in the west against Mexican tomatoes and California lettuce when Canadian tomatoes and lettuce come on the market. I suppose I could include strawberries and raspberries as well. This tariff imposition would have to move across Canada with the seasons. I do not see why this should not be done. If we can get our strawberries, raspberries, and asparagus from the west to meet the eastern market, why should non-Canadian grown products be allowed into the country? Eventually I hope the government sees the need for encouraging our agricultural producers so that they can live and thrive in the communities of their choice.

It is unbelievable, for example, that the tomato levy does not begin until the Ontario tomatoes come on stream. That levy should become effective when British Columbia tomatoes come on stream. That is what I am requesting. It is part of the symbolism behind the gesture I make on the first day of spring by distributing daffodils. This applies not only to fruit and vegetables, but it applies to flowers as well. Since flowers can be produced in this country, why should we not be protected against imported ones? Sometimes these imported flowers come from as far away as Europe. If these flowers can be grown in Canada, surely that industry should be protected against such invasions.

I should like to refer to Schedule IV of Bill C-48 which deals with item No. 97012-1. It reads as follows:

Costumes or parts thereof, designed or decorated in a manner reflecting a specific ethno-cultural heritage.

This is a good item. I am glad it is included. The portion of duty payable as drawback is 99 per cent. It is an excellent provision, but why should it be limited to the use of bona fide ethno-cultural groups which are recognized as such pursuant to regulations established by order of the governor in council, and which require such costumes for the public manifestation of their ethno-cultural heritage, under such regulations as the minister may prescribe? It is a 99 per cent drawback, rebate or whatever. Why should it be limited to a group applying for this particular drawback? Why should an individual be restricted from applying? I speak with some feeling on this matter, because not long ago I ordered a made-to-measure kilt and was faced with customs duty. I look pretty smart in a kilt.