

*Customs Tariff*

amounts of tariffs is: Where is the money going to come from? Who will pay? Of course the answer is that we do not know. The problem is that we have not had the opportunity to ask those questions and to get those answers from the Government.

During the course of earlier stages of the Bill, members of my Party, myself as the proponent, moved a number of motions essentially designed to try to re-establish parliamentary control over the whole process. We gave, quite explicitly, our reasons for so doing.

The reasons we gave were the following ones. We said that in the past the power to exchange most-favoured-nation tariff treatment with a country under the general tariff before was relatively minor. We might have a trade exchange of perhaps a few million dollars a year. It was relatively routine for Canada to reach an agreement with another country to go ahead and exchange most favoured nation status or some other type of privilege. Therefore, there was not a loud cry for Parliament to be required to approve.

We said then—and I believe it is correct—that the situation has changed quite fundamentally. This is because of the determination of the Government, despite very broad and deep concerns raised by an increasing number of Canadians, to use the executive power to enter into a trading arrangement, possibly under Section 62 of the Act. I cannot say that for sure because I just do not know.

However, over the course of the next 24 days, with the Christmas and New Year's holidays along the way, the Government intends to take us helter-skelter into a binding trade agreement with the United States. One of its most important features comes squarely under the powers given under Bill C-87.

Earlier in second reading debate my colleagues debated that fact at length. It is our feeling that a Bill which would normally be routine is no longer routine in this case because of the circumstances surrounding it. Possibly the Government, which very few people in the country trust any more, is thinking that if it cannot get what it wants by means of action in Parliament, if Parliament quite possibly finds it difficult to get work done when we come back sometime in mid-January, it would then use executive power not just to sign the treaty with the United States of America but to implement a treaty which will have fundamental effects on every aspect of Canadian life.

This is why I say that I believe the fundamental principles which are at stake in Bill C-87 are principles related to sovereignty and to the question of democracy. Should Parliament have the power, which is quite clearly laid out in legislation, to ensure that the Government cannot do by the back door what it perhaps does not dare to do or might not be able to do by the front door?

I assume you would agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that it is not right for a Government to be able to do something

surreptitiously when it refuses to, does not want to, or is blocked by Parliament from doing it in an open and overt way.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, since you were a Member of the House at the time the Liberals were in power, the degree to which you and members of your Party fought valiantly on a number of occasions for the principle that Parliament should in fact continue to be sovereign. That does not mean that the majority should not have the right to decide in the end. I have a problem with that. However, we face a real problem in terms of what is happening now. The majority is seeking to make a decision on the basis of an election result in 1984 and on the basis of not having proposed and not having a mandate for the major changes in tariffs and other measures apparently anticipated in the agreement which will be made public over the course of the next two days or three days.

Until now we have had no word at all on exactly how the Government intends to proceed in terms of legislative approval of the details of the free trade agreement.

I ask the many Canadians who are increasingly concerned about it whether the Government of Canada is being adequate and fair in relation to average Canadians by publishing a document of some 2,000 pages in length on a Thursday and taking it to Parliament for three days or four days of debate the following week, debate which inevitably will not be able to get down to all the details and all the fine print of an agreement. Dare I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that it is some 200 pages long, has substantial numbers of pages of annexes that contain God knows what, and on top of that has some 1,500 pages of detailed tariff schedules.

I do not know how I could even read and absorb that material over the course of the three days or four days between its publication and the time that it actually comes up for debate. I must say that the democratic process where Parliament should have the right to consider major matters in a serious way will be a joke and a sham, if in fact we do not get any chance to consider in detail or in a more adequate way what will be proposed to us before then.

In a general way, as I am sure Hon. Members will point out, the intention of Bill C-87 is to have a harmonized system. When consultations were taking place between the Government of Canada and the trade community—exporters and importers—it was quite clearly indicated by the Department of National Revenue in hearings that took place across the country early this fall that the implementation of this harmonized system of tariffs would take place on January 1, 1988, under the condition that our major trading partners, that is the United States and Japan, adopted the harmonized system at the same time. Therefore, I was very surprised when I had my office talk to the American Embassy and to sources in Congress in order to find out whether the Americans, who after all are our major trading partners, were in fact on track in terms of bringing this new system into force.

In fact, what is happening is that Canada is harmonizing its tariff system with an American system which will not be