

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 2, 1973

The House met at 11 a.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

TABLING OF DOCUMENT OUTLINING POSITION TO BE TAKEN BY CANADA AT LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE—REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

Hon. Jack Davis (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, as previously agreed I am pleased to table in English and French a document outlining the government's position for the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

I would also like to have the unanimous consent from the House to have this document, as previously mentioned by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Davis, seconded by Mr. MacEachen, moves that the background document on the issues involved in the forthcoming conference on the Law of the Sea be referred to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence.

Motion agreed to.

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AGRICULTURE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMPOSITION OF TEMPORARY SURTAX ON IMPORTS OF LIVE CATTLE AND DRESSED BEEF

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, members should be aware that the government has today imposed a temporary surtax on imports of live cattle and dressed beef in accordance with section 8 of the Customs Tariff.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): The surtax will be levied at a rate of three cents a pound on live cattle and six cents a pound on fresh dressed beef. This measure has been put in place to stabilize the Canadian market for beef and cattle which in recent weeks has been disrupted by an unusually large volume of imports. The government is concerned that without such a measure Canadian beef producers will not have sufficient assurance of market stability to produce the volume of beef required to meet Canadian demand. Adequate levels of Canadian produc-

tion will minimize the likelihood of significant price increases during the coming year.

[Translation]

Steps have been taken to advise U.S. authorities of this action. They have been told that it is required to offset the disruption of the North American market largely brought on by the effects of measures taken earlier this year by the U.S. to regulate prices of beef and exports of cattle feed.

[English]

The surtax is a temporary measure. We expect that North American trade in beef and cattle will return to traditional levels before long. The decision to impose a surtax will therefore be reviewed in 30 days.

Mr. Bert Hargrave (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I should like, first of all, to extend my appreciation to the minister for sending me a copy of the announcement, although I have only just received it.

I assure the minister and the Minister of Agriculture that the announcement was expected. In view of my remarks last night in the special debate on agriculture I must say that the announcement of the surtax will be welcomed by the beef cattle industry in Canada. In addition, I commend the two ministers for having made it on a Friday and not a Monday. I have in mind, of course, that when export controls were announced earlier they were announced at the beginning of the week, and it really did cause havoc. I have to say that the government does learn from experience in this regard.

● (1110)

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hargrave: I suggest that this is an instance where the representations of a Canadian industry, the Canadian cattle industry, through their organization, the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, have indeed been heard, and I am sure that the cattlemen appreciate this.

I realize that it was a difficult decision not only for the government and its various departments but also for the cattlemen themselves. Until two weeks ago there was a clear division in the cattle industry on this issue. Cattlemen in western Canada felt that we should ride out the situation, that it would correct itself and no action should be taken. But in the two weeks that have elapsed since that time great havoc has occurred in the marketing system in Canada because of, let us say, the errors of another government which has involved itself in a basic agricultural commodity. This resulted in great disruption, and I am sure the action that was taken today was very necessary.

I suggest there was clear and sufficient evidence of the impact of these heavy imports of overfat cattle coming into Canada as long as two weeks ago for action to have