

Customs Tariff

demanding that purely administrative work should be submitted for parliamentary approval. Briefly, Mr. Speaker, I would invite all Hon. Members to vote against Motion No. 11 as well as Motions Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11.

● (1140)

[English]

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the last 10 minute presentation of the Parliamentary Secretary. That same argument has been used many times in history to defend the divine right of Kings, to defend the courts of Star Chamber, to defend enlightened despots, to defend the Inquisition, to defend various forms of bodies to make judgments on the basis of efficiency, to keep the country running, to keep the trains running, and all those wonderful slogans that have been used to defend ways of making decisions without recourse to democratically elected bodies and legislatures.

It would be important for Conservative Members of Parliament to recognize why such amendments are necessary. Let us presume for a moment that you were Jonathan Swift and you had the opportunity to pick a subject in the contemporary world of satire and you wanted to find a particular object which could bring out the absurdity and ludicrousness of the world. What would you choose, Mr. Speaker? Probably number one on the agenda would be a government that signed a deal that is not yet a deal, that got down to that finger-lickin' good Kentucky fried chicken summit meeting in Washington on October 4 where all the Ministers got together and announced with great fanfare and flourish, "Hey, we have a deal". Two months later to the day, on December 4, the American negotiator said, "We may have a deal and we may not have a deal". This gang still has not decided two months later on the most significant initiative within decades. This gang, who cannot shoot straight, still has not got itself a deal. To compound the problem, the Government has the incredible gall to initiate a parliamentary committee to consult with Canadians about a deal not yet made.

Jonathan Swift would have a wonderful time this far by asking "How can you comment on something that is not yet completed?" By some great leap of imagination, Conservative Members of Parliament are able to visualize what may be in the deal, not that they are going to tell anybody else, but it is that leap of faith that implies, "You have to believe what we believe" in order to agree with them.

Then the Government sends a committee across the country for public hearings, one day per province. The million people in the Province of Manitoba get to make six representations on a deal they have not yet seen. Nine million people in the Province of Ontario get to make six representations on a deal they have not yet seen. The committee is asked to report its findings to this Parliament on the basis of a document it has not seen, on the basis of presentations that are not relevant because—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I do not wish to interrupt the Hon. Member because I enjoy listening to his debates in the House, but I must bring to his attention the fact that we are dealing with Bill C-87, an Act respecting imposition of duties, customs and other charges to give effect to the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding system. I would appreciate very much a slight bit of relevancy to the Bill. I do not wish to interrupt the Hon. Member because I sincerely appreciate his debates, but I would appreciate also, so that other younger Members in this House will be able to take into effect exactly what he is saying, if he were a little more relevant as far as the Bill is concerned.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, this type of Bill is ordinarily, as you have indicated, technical and fairly routine, but it is the contention of opposition Members on this side of the House that we are dealing with an entirely different situation because the free trade agreement signed between the Government of Canada and the President of the United States changes the whole trade situation in fundamental ways. Therefore you cannot discuss this without discussing the implications of free trade.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I appreciate what the other senior Member of this Chamber is saying, and I am also looking forward to his participation in the debate, but the Bill now being debated goes into the matter mentioned by the Hon. Member. Nevertheless, I would like the Member to come back to the meat of the Bill, please.

Mr. Cassidy: Mr. Speaker, in order to be of assistance to the Chair I would draw your attention to Clause 22 of the Bill which is one of the clauses amended in the series of amendments currently under debate. Clause 22 reads:

Subject to Section 23 and 24, goods that originate in a country listed in Schedule III as a beneficiary of the Most-Favoured-Nation Tariff are entitled to the rates of customs duty set out with respect to those goods in the Most-Favoured-Nation Tariff in Schedule I.

That allows in a subsequent section—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I have no problem with that. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) has the floor for debate.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I would only say in response to your suggestion of relevance that the argument I am attempting to build in 10 minutes is somewhat akin to building a cathedral. One must lay the foundation and the flying buttresses before one completes the superstructure. Therefore, if you will bear with me for a moment or two longer, I will then complete the full structure of the case to be made.

I am alluding to the document we have not yet seen which will contain within it a number of annexes setting out a series of tariff rates. We do not know what is in it. We have not seen it yet. We do not know which commodities, goods or services will be given a series of tariff reductions over the 5 or 10 year period. As the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy)