

Government Orders

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak at report stage of Bill C-57, specifically to Motion No. 1.

It is important to me and my party that the World Trade Organization be allowed to get up and running very quickly. Canada has a number of disputes we would like to see moved to the international stage such as the wheat dispute and the constant steel disputes between Canada and the United States. It is very important to move these on very quickly.

Motion No. 1 never really tries to accomplish this. It goes against the spirit of the trade agreement, especially the fourth part of that section which proposes the imposition of new tariffs at a time when we are seeking to reduce all tariffs worldwide.

In addition, constant provincial consultation will tie the hands of the federal government in trade disputes and international economic matters. Canada should speak with one voice in international forums.

The second part would tie the federal government's hands in allocating tariff quota for supply managed sectors. I am sure that is not what is intended in Motion No. 1, but that could be a result.

I would like to deal with Motion No. 2 which is in the group we are debating this morning. This motion asks for a yearly report to the House of Commons outlining trade implementation and the major trade obligations undertaken by Canada and the impact on Canadian workers and companies.

Those kind of assessments are being done on an ongoing basis. The government should not commit itself to studying the impact of trade agreements on workers and companies on a yearly basis. These studies are carried out all the time by the industries and workers groups and the parties involved should be the ones that assess the impact. They would also be a little bit more effective in studying the impact on their groups rather than having the government do it for them.

● (1140)

I oppose Motion No. 6. It would create unnecessary delays. International relations are the responsibility of the federal government. A House committee can ask the government to justify its actions, including calling ministers and departmental officials before a standing committee at any time. This is an ambiguous motion, one that would be really designed to make more work. That option is already there, let us use it.

Regarding Motion No. 7, the House already has the power to ask the minister for reports when it deems necessary. Regarding the social clause that is being proposed by the NDP, this has already been rejected by the parties that negotiated the GATT agreement for the last seven years and to try and move it back in now would be a mistake.

In addition to that, labour and environmental standards that the members down the line here have suggested would actually have a detrimental effect on the very people they are suggesting to help. If people in underdeveloped countries have to conform to a minimum wage standard and strict environmental standards like Canada has, how can they compete in the world marketplace? It is not necessary. It was recognized that it is not necessary in the discussions that led up to the signing of the GATT. In addition it is a matter that is going to be discussed on an ongoing basis in the second round of the GATT negotiations to see if there is any necessity for it.

I oppose the motions being proposed and urge the House to move quickly to implement the GATT agreement through the World Trade Organization and try to resolve a lot of outstanding issues very quickly with the weight of all 120 member countries behind us.

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to speak to Motion No. 1, especially clause 3.4. Clause 3.4 of Motion No. 1 indicates that in the case where imports exceed the established tariff rate levels, the minister shall impose tariffs to ensure that such products are not permitted at prices lower than those in the domestic market.

The concern that is being raised in Bill C-57 is the proposal that would allow supplemental imports of supply managed commodities as "within accessed commitment", which means they would enter Canada at low or no tariff.

In talking to people in the industry about section 3.4, they have indicated that they think the section is far too restrictive in that it provides the minister with little or no discretionary power.

It is important to understand that in supply managed industries some commodities require from time to time to import and require supplementary quotas. The problem is how do you do that in such a way so as not to allow the industry to use the supplemental quotas as a lever with which to either manipulate prices or to break the supply management system?

Let me give the House an example. A cheese manufacturer who makes frozen pizzas, when asked for future milk demands, understates them. Later when the cheese manufacturer needed milk to manufacture cheese for pizza he would indicate that market demand has all of a sudden increased. Milk could not be sourced in Canada because no one would be prepared to produce that unexpected demand in that short a time. The manufacturer then could apply for and be granted a tariff free supplemental import permit. Other manufacturers would learn of this advantage and either try and beat the system themselves, as the original applicant had done, or pressure domestic producers for a lower price to match that of the non-tariff imports so that they could compete.