

Customs Tariff

process. I think it is clear that it is not. I think we should get this bill into committee very quickly where we can identify clause by clause some of the concerns of hon. members.

At this point I should like to make a couple of general comments. I recognize Mr. Speaker's generosity in providing an opportunity to the hon. member for Edmonton East (Mr. Yurko) to be in the chair. We are always pleased to have a very objective individual in the chair, and Mr. Speaker could not have picked a more objective individual from the House this afternoon.

We are looking at some very positive tariff changes on imported goods to assist the disabled. While one's first response is to laud this as a very generous move on the part of the government, as indeed it is, I find it somewhat hypocritical. Not many weeks ago we debated in the House a bill to amend the Excise Act by placing an excise tax on paraphernalia for the disabled. At that time we raised questions as to why a special tax would be placed upon back braces, leg braces and items thereof, at a time when we had just received a report on the disabled. Hon. members opposite indicated that they would study the matter, report back to the House and perhaps bring in changes to the legislation. We on this side sincerely hope that that is in process now. We welcome this particular move. I think it is a very progressive and positive step in the right direction. I would make the same comments with regard to the whole topic of dental materials.

● (1740)

I want to focus on a point which the Minister of State for Finance indicated. These goods are being allowed into the country duty free because they are not produced in our country. Therefore, they will not be challenging domestic manufacturing or industries, which is indeed the case. It makes one wonder how often we welcome foreign products into Canada duty free or at preferential rates. There is no comparable manufacturer in Canada because the market is essentially being overrun by foreign products.

We should look very carefully at this whole matter, and I think it is important that we get this topic into committee as quickly as possible so that we can see it within some context of the development of our own domestic industry and our willingness to assist our friends from across the way.

When we see a bill similar to Bill C-90, we have to wonder in what context this bill was introduced. When we decide that we are going to reduce the tariff on a whole number of goods, in what context are we making that decision? Since unquestionably we do lack a comprehensive industrial strategy for Canada, it cannot then be placed in a comprehensive context for Canada. Then we look at the lesser developed countries or those countries listed in the bill designated by the United Nations as being nations developing least. We are interested in assisting these nations and that is why we are reducing the tariffs and changing the quotas; that is why we are dismantling these tariff walls. Has enough thought been given to determining what effect these imports into Canada have on a particular developing country? We note with interest from the background notes which the minister kindly provided us that some

of the main trading partners of the least developing nations are Bangladesh, Guinea, Haiti and Tanzania. From those countries we import green coffee, bauxite and jute products duty free and we make the assumption that it is in those countries' best interests to import them duty free. I wonder if that is necessarily always the case.

When you look at a bauxite mine and the conditions under which the ore is being mined, or when you look at the nation that is moving into a cash crop such as coffee and ask who is benefiting from these exports of coffee you find it is a select elite minority in that Third World country. Are they using productive agricultural land for the sake of growing a cash crop, such as coffee? That is a question I think we must ask ourselves as we go ahead and take what we perceive as being very positive steps in terms of reducing our trade barriers and welcoming more goods, particularly from developing countries.

In what context do we make this evaluation? I feel that is an important component and one that can be dealt with seriously only in committee, not in the House. We are able to ask specialists in committee whether it is in the best interest of Guinea and Tanzania to be importing these products, or whether there are other products we should be importing in lieu of these.

Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If I understood what the hon. member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis) said, he said he hoped that we would move into committee to call in experts to discuss this matter. I would like to have verification on this point if I am wrong, but I believe this bill is going to be discussed in Committee of the Whole on the floor of this House. Am I not correct, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The hon. member is correct. That is the motion before the House, that the bill be referred to the Committee of the Whole. Perhaps the House ought to appreciate the hon. member's point, and the Chair ought to indicate that really it is not a point of order.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intervention, and while it was my understanding that we were moving into Committee of the Whole, the reason for my interjection was to question that particular action. When you consider the business that ought to be before this House, and particularly the borrowing authority act which is coming up in a few days and the kind of intense analysis it must receive in the Committee of the Whole, is this the kind of bill with which we want to take up the precious time of this House? I would question that. I would also encourage hon. members to reconsider spending the time of this House going over Bill C-90 clause by clause and looking into the various aspects of our tariffs on goods for the disabled, dental products, general commodities of agriculture and others. This is a very technical bill. It is not the kind of bill that lends itself to this kind of discussion.

With those few comments I will close and encourage hon. members of the House to recognize that important legislation is pending, much more serious than this bill in terms of a comprehensive and over-all discussion, and to get this bill to committee as quickly as possible. Consideration should be