

THE SENATE

Monday, December 15, 1947.

The Senate met at 8 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.

Prayers and routine proceedings.

TARIFFS AND TRADE

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE AT GENEVA— APPROVAL OF GENERAL AGREEMENT— REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

Hon. WISHART McL. ROBERTSON moved:

That the standing committee of the Senate on Canadian Trade Relations be directed to inquire into and report upon the subject matter of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, including the protocol of provisional application thereof, annexed to the Final Act of the second session of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment held at Geneva from April 10 to October 30, 1947, together with the complementary agreements of October 30, 1947, between Canada and the United States of America and between Canada and the United Kingdom.

That the said committee be authorized to send for persons, papers and records.

He said: Honourable senators, I should like to make brief reference to two phases of this motion.

First, on December 10 the Prime Minister agreed, I believe at the suggestion of the leader of the opposition in another place, to withdraw his request that parliament sanction the complementary agreements between Canada and the United States of America and between Canada and the United Kingdom. It is my intention at some future date to move a similar motion, so that our resolution may be in keeping with that of the other house. I have not the exact phraseology of the amended resolution before me, so I am now moving with the understanding that the portion of it to which I have referred will in due course be withdrawn.

Secondly, for the benefit of honourable senators who were not present on Thursday last, I may say that I then suggested referring the subject-matter of these agreements to the Standing Committee on Canadian Trade Relations, so that honourable members could secure more details; and that the committee should call before it Mr. Hector MacKinnon, Mr. Deutsch, and other government officials who were directly concerned with the negotiations at Geneva, as well as anyone else who could throw light on the subject. If the resolution is adopted, the officials will be available tomorrow. After consultation with the chairman, I have taken the liberty

of calling a meeting of the committee at 10.30 in the morning. The usual notices, of course, will be officially sent out if and when the Senate approves of this procedure. I need not emphasize the fact that every honourable senator will be welcome at the meeting, and I am sure that a good deal of information will be forthcoming.

Hon. Mr. BALLANTYNE: May I ask who is chairman of that committee?

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: Honourable Senator Euler.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: I take it that it is not the intention to close up the matter tomorrow, and that the proceedings probably will not be completed until after the Christmas adjournment.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: That is so. The resolution will stand on our Order Paper, and the meetings of the committee can continue as long as the committee sees fit.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: Before the motion is carried, may I express my hearty concurrence in what the leader has said. The people of Canada, as represented by such bodies as chambers of commerce, labour unions, railway organizations, and business men should be encouraged to attend these meetings, to present their views and, if necessary, propose amendments. The agreement is so complex that I doubt whether even an expert could digest it in a month. I believe that if a live interest were taken in the work of the committee on this problem, it would be greatly to the advantage of the people generally; and I am very glad that the leader has intimated that he will not try to have the committee sessions concluded this week.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: It will be for the members of the committee to consider and determine what they will do; but my own opinion as a member of the committee, so far as it may have any weight, would support the continuation of the inquiry as long as seems advisable. Honourable senators understand that at the moment the resolution for approval stands adjourned in the name of the leader of the opposition. That simply means that it is adjourned pending the securing of additional information.

Hon. Mr. HAIG: That is so.

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: If it should happen that after one or two sessions honourable senators desire to continue the debate on the agreement, I see no reason why, with the concurrence of the Senate, they should not do so. But I repeat that, so far as I am concerned as a member of the committee, it is