

is not a matter of translation. It is a matter of basis. I understood by the way he referred to the United States a lot of time that he admired them. Of course as a responsible Government we are not going to enter a fight of protectionism against a big country. We are interested in their big market and maybe the United States is interested in showing the whole world a good example, how it can be a good neighbour, in order to exercise free trade that it wants to establish with other countries. I do not think it is a matter of protectionism, as referred to by the Leader of the small Opposition, I think that these people use it as an example and I think I understand them well.

Mr. Deans: As the House Leader for the real Opposition as opposed to the small Opposition—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deans: I am not exactly sure whether that reference was a put down or a misunderstanding. However, I accept it in the good humour that always exists in the House of Commons. It was intended to be humorous. Let me suggest, however, to the Hon. Member in all fairness, and I respect him, he knows that—we have been together outside of this place—I think he misunderstands what I am saying. It is not a matter of admiration for the U.S., neither is it support for its policy. It is an understanding of it and to understand what it is doing is to understand that what this Bill does is take away what limited protection we have in certain areas.

It does not interest me whether on an individual basis each of those companies that are presently involved in business in Canada can see certain minor advantages to the steps that are being recommended. That is not important because there is a much larger question looming on the horizon. In fact, it is not even on the horizon any more, it is much closer than that. That much larger question touches on the negotiations that will be started within the next short while with the U.S. over the question of free trade sectoral or otherwise. I am saying quite clearly my understanding of what the U.S. is now doing, and I think that my understanding is accurate. I believe that as a result of long and difficult meetings held over an extended period of time, I have some sense of where Congress is going and I might say to the Hon. Member that he is not going in the same direction as is the President and the administration. Don't ever get the wrong impression in that regard. Congress is moving in an almost diametrically opposite direction to the administration and the President of the United States at the moment in a variety of different trade areas. The interesting thing about it is that their only concern for Canada is to try to keep us from selling into their markets the things that we make more cheaply than them.

We have to keep that in mind when we are discussing this. It will detrimentally impact in every industrial part of this country, and I do not want the Hon. Member to misunderstand for one moment what I am saying. There is absolutely no doubt that whatever small protection we now have we should maintain until we see what their posture is going to be at the negotiating table. That is the argument. That is why we do not

Public Service Employment Act

proceed until after we get a clear picture of where they are going. That is what I said at the beginning, that is what I said halfway through, that is what I said at the end, that is what I answered in the first question, that is what I answer now. This is not the time to do this.

If there is a time, and I am not sure there is but I am prepared to concede that there may be further debate necessary to determine that, but if there is a time it must surely come after we can see clearly whether the administration in the United States led by the President or whether the Congress of the United States led by the Congress will be the victors.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order, please. It being 5 o'clock, the House will now proceed with the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

● (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS— MOTIONS

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT ACT

SUGGESTED AMENDMENT RESPECTING GREATER PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL PROCESS

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier) moved that, in the opinion of this House, the Government should consider the advisability of amending the Public Service Employment Act and other related statutes in consequence thereof, in order to permit greater participation in the political process by federal public servants than is now allowed under the aforementioned statutes.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the House is of course well acquainted with the subject of this motion, because we have discussed this topic a number of times. If I am not mistaken, we have had three similar motions before the House during the current session. I remember taking part in a debate on the subject not long ago, while my colleague, the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria), the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) and the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) have also proposed motions similar to the one before the House today.

I must admit that considering the repeated consideration of this topic in previous Parliaments, I am somewhat reluctant to rise again in the House to raise this very important issue, namely that of letting federal public servants know what their rights are in terms of participation in the political process.

Mr. Speaker, in drafting this motion I was mindful of a number of promises made by the Government during the last election campaign, promises which were also made by my own