

Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Chairman, I noted with interest the comments of my hon. friend with respect to his premier. As a citizen of Ontario, I watched with interest during the last campaign the all-out exhaustive, unrelenting campaigning by the Premier of Ontario against the Free Trade Agreement. In fact, he was so exhausted that during the last two weeks of the campaign he went to the Far East to recuperate.

I hereby give notice pursuant to Standing Order 57 that at the next sitting of Committee of the Whole House on Bill C-2, an Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States of America, I will move that further consideration of Clauses 1 through 150, the preamble, title and schedules and any amendments proposed thereto shall be the first business of the committee and shall not further be postponed.

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Chairman, I rise on a point of order. I wish to give notice that if the Minister chooses to move the motion of which he has given notice at the next sitting of the committee, I would like to raise a point of order before the motion is put to the Committee because it would be my submission that such a motion would be out of order.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Chairman, this is a rather historic occasion. If the Hon. Member actually does move closure at the Committee of the Whole stage at the next sitting of the House, it would be the first time this has happened in 32 years. I just want to draw to your attention that the last time this happened was during the infamous pipeline debate. Once again I just want to say that this is an historic day but a rather black mark in terms of Canada's history.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Chairman, I think we are all dismayed by the action taken by the Minister, but we have become accustomed to these kinds of tactics. I want to raise a question with the Minister relating to procedure. This morning the junior Minister for Trade made a direct request on behalf of the Government that amendments be presented so they could be given consideration and we would be able to organize the business in a way that would allow us to make sure those amendments are there.

If the Government intends to cut off debate, is it also prepared to have the presentation of the amendments relating to the different clauses of the Bill proceed in such a way that would allow us to make sure that those amendments are there? I am simply repeating the words

used by the Minister this morning. Is the Deputy Government House Leader prepared to end debate tomorrow under those circumstances on these very important matters, before there has been an opportunity to comply with the request of the Minister and ensure that we have an opportunity to specifically look at the amendments the Opposition wants to present?

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Chairman, that offer was naturally on the table last week, given in good faith, and we were prepared to do that as we were prepared to debate through last weekend in order to give all colleagues in the House an opportunity to debate.

Unfortunately, the offer was not taken up by the Opposition Parties. I understand from my colleague, the Minister of State for International Trade, that he has not had an opportunity to even review the amendments, although that might have been made possible by my hon. friend. Under those circumstances I certainly hope we will get to the clauses to which my hon. friend wishes to make his amendments, and also allow other colleagues to make their amendments. But those offers were on the table last week, given in good faith by the Government, not taken up by the Opposition Parties.

Mr. Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): I just want to clarify something with the Hon. Minister. He only stated half the proposition. He said those offers were on the table, but they were conditional on the time allocation. Of course, no one who has any respect for the rights of this Parliament would agree to under those conditions.

I want to repeat to the Chair, because I think it would be part of the judgment of the Chair itself, that it was not an offer made last week but one made this morning, where the Minister requested the submission of those amendments. We would like to have the opportunity to present them so that the debate can target particularly the kind of concerns our Members have raised during the day. We want to have the offer to put these forward. I think it would be a judgment by the Deputy Government House Leader and the Government during the one day we have left, to allow us to proceed to some of the pertinent clauses in the Bill so that amendments can be properly presented in their proper form.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Chairman, the offers were on the table last week, made in good faith. The offers were on the table this morning, made in good faith. The offers were on the table this afternoon, made in good faith. They have not been taken up by the Opposition Parties.