

*Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*

the Government failed to list in its long title all the statutes which Bill C-130 intends to amend or change.

● (1140)

By adopting this vague approach the Government has failed to provide a procedural justification for the inclusion in Bill C-130 of amendments or changes affecting upward of two dozen statutes. Thus, if the Government attempts to cite to you, Sir, precedents for its approach, I think you will find, in examining these precedents, that they refer to Bills in which the long title also included the Bills to be amended by the proposed Bill to which the long title was appended.

I also want to say that if the Bill is permitted to be proceeded with in its present form, that is, with its general long title referring only to the agreement and not to the amendment of Acts, the Government at some future point if debate on Bill C-130 is allowed to continue may try to argue that virtually all or any amendments to the Bill are beyond the scope of the Bill by virtue of the Acts not having been included in its title. If this argument is made, and if it is accepted, it would have the effect of making all proceedings during the detailed consideration of the clauses of the Bill irrelevant and even farcical.

What I have said in this regard leads to the procedurally relevant objection to the omnibus procedure, that the agreement and therefore the Bill by their very nature affect an extremely wide range of activities and issues going well beyond what one normally thinks of under the heading of "Trade". Such vital issues as investment policy, regional development policy, policy on financial institutions, policy on energy security—and I could go on and on—are included in Bill C-130.

In some cases the provisions of Bill C-130 represent a substantial departure from what has been the heretofore generally accepted policies in the form of statutes adopted by this House. I submit that it is very much in the Canadian parliamentary tradition that citizens affected by such radical changes be permitted to have the fullest possible input into the legislative process as it affects each and every one of these policies.

This is another reason that there should be separate Bills on each and every policy set out in the statutes adopted by this House which are intended to be changed by Bill C-130, because if there were separate Bills rather than this one omnibus Bill, Bill C-130, there would have to be separate committee stages carried out by legislative committees for each and every one of those Bills. This would give interested members of the public an opportunity which they would not have if this Bill were allowed to proceed as an omnibus Bill to present their views to the legislative committees studying the proposals in the separate Bills, which I submit should be before the House if two dozen or more individual statutes are to be amended.

I suppose in a way I am also asking you, Mr. Speaker, to use your authority in the famous Standing Order 1 of this House

which was recently argued in another context, and I do not intend to repeat it at this time. Parliamentary tradition certainly must mean that the opportunities of not only Members of this House, but equally and perhaps more important, of members of the public, to have an input into each and every facet intended to be covered by Bill C-130 should not be abridged or lost by allowing the Government's intentions of adopting the trade deal with the United States to be carried through by an omnibus Bill in the form of Bill C-130.

As I have indicated, Bill C-130 is a massive Bill and will only go to one committee, a committee which will inevitably lack the breadth of expertise required for consideration of a Bill of such scope and size. Furthermore, the work-load of that committee, even if it is permitted by the government majority on the committee to undertake a proper examination of the Bill, will be so onerous as to make it difficult for it to give due consideration to all relevant opinion. I repeat that dividing the Bill into several components would lead to several committees constituted of more experienced members in specialized areas who would be able to give far more effective consideration to these matters. That also would make it possible for informed public input into each of the aspects covered by this Bill, which I think is consistent with our parliamentary tradition.

One should take note here of the sabre-rattling public statements of the Minister for International Trade (Mr. Crosbie) who is sponsoring this Bill. He seems to be trying to establish the ground that he and his colleagues intend to use the Government's massive majority to prevent proper consideration of the Bill by the House or by whatever committee will be given responsibility for the Bill, if it is allowed to proceed in its present omnibus nature. This declared intention to run roughshod over the parliamentary process makes the Speaker's intervention on this matter essential in light of the importance of our parliamentary tradition. Again I repeat, Sir, that I think this is supported by the very clear words of Standing Order 1 of this House.

I want to put on record that neither Bill C-130 nor the trade deal which it is supposed to implement, has yet been submitted to even one minute of formal parliamentary consideration through debate in this House and in committee. That is the basis of our whole parliamentary system and which is clearly understood by members of the public to be the way in which the people they elect to represent them in Parliament deal with measures before the House.

It is not the fault of the Opposition if the Government has dithered for months and months before getting ready and tabling legislation in the House which attempts to implement this trade deal negotiated between our Government and the American Government. Arguments have been made outside the House—and they may be repeated in this procedural debate or in other forums offered by the House—that the trade deal has already been considered. I repeat that the consideration established by rules of the House on second reading, consideration and study in committee, consideration