

Customs Tariff

I am looking forward to disposing of these motions in rather quick order, because they are all based upon a false premise.

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, in his remarks the Minister accused us of wasting the time of the House. I think it is important for people who are watching the proceedings of the House of Commons this morning to realize that report stage debate just started 40 minutes ago.

No one is against the intent of Bill C-87. We believe in harmonizing trade; there is no question about that. However, we do not want to see the Government, through this legislation, moving toward its free trade agenda, the Mulroney package, with the Americans.

We have certain fears about what will be in the final fine print of the agreement with the Americans. Over the last couple of years we have already had a variance in what the Government was saying with regard to the Auto Pact. At the very beginning of the negotiations with the United States, we were told that the Auto Pact would not be touched. We had the assurances of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Clark) and other cabinet Ministers that it would not be affected one iota. Yet we know that the Government has already thrown in the towel with regard to the penalty clauses and that, in the negotiations which are still taking place with the Americans, the Auto Pact, tariffs, and penalties topics are still matters of contention.

The so-called free trade deal signed on October 3 is not ready and is not before the House. It would be irresponsible for the House to pass legislation, which could have a direct effect on the trade deal, before we actually have the fine print of the final copy before us.

In part, the motion of the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) reads:

Notwithstanding any regulation made under subsection (2), goods wholly or partly produced in Mexico shall not be deemed to originate in the United States.

If the Minister, as he indicated in his speech, has some problem with the amendment—maybe he thinks that it goes too far—he or some other member of the Government has the ability to put forward a subamendment. However, for us to give the Government through Order in Council the complete freedom to deem that cars almost completely produced in Mexico will be considered American cars for the sake of the Auto Pact is a threat to thousands of jobs in Canada. We do not believe that we should give a blank cheque to Cabinet when it comes to the future of our auto parts industry.

For us to do that in advance of having the final copy of the trade deal would be irresponsible. We need to know what is in the trade deal before we can pass this piece of legislation. We cannot be faced with a situation where the House of Commons passes the legislation and the Government makes all sorts of regulations which are going to cost Canadians jobs, without the benefit of having a finalized copy of the trade deal in front of us.

I am not speaking about some idle threat. As a previous Hon. Member mentioned, the situation is such that hundreds of plants are being built in Mexico at the present time for the sole purpose of exporting goods back into the United States. A major area in which this is happening is that of auto parts. As was also mentioned earlier, we already import from Mexico more in cars and auto parts than all our exports to that country. We already have a deficit on that one item, and that deficit would increase if we allowed the Government, through Order in Council, to count as United States products all cars and auto parts produced south of the United States-Mexico border. It is a serious concern, and it is something with which we must deal.

We are in a situation where the House of Commons will be denied any real debate of the Canada-U.S. trade deal before the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) signs it on January 3. Today is December 1, and here we are in the House of Commons and we do not have the agreement before us. We do not have any enabling legislation or a debate on the trade deal, yet we know that as soon as possible the Prime Minister will run down to Washington to sign the deal. It is unacceptable that that should happen. No responsible Government would allow the Prime Minister to sign an international agreement when we have not even seen its final wording or have not had the benefit of a debate based upon its final wording. The Prime Minister is committing not only his Government but future Governments to a certain course of action without consulting the people of the nation.

The Prime Minister campaigned prior to 1984 against a trade arrangement with the Americans. He said that it would be wrong. He admitted that it would be dangerous. He knew that it would cost us jobs, yet he has made a 180-degree reversal. Now, in approximately 33 days, the same Prime Minister wants to sign a trade arrangement or deal with the Americans which none of us has ever seen.

The Minister for International Trade (Miss Carney) rose in the House of Commons and said that it was good enough for us to have the elements of the trade deal. She said that that was all we really had to know because it was the basic package which we were able to debate if we wanted. She also said that the committee travelling across the country right now would be hearing from witnesses and would have copies of the elements of the deal. If that is good enough, why is it that two months after the elements were signed it has been impossible for the Canadian and American negotiators to come up with the final package? If the elements of the deal are so good and so complete, then obviously the final draft could be signed and it should be in front of this House.

● (1200)

There are major considerations and difficulties with which the Canadian and American negotiators are dealing. For the House of Commons committee to be travelling and for witnesses to be making presentations without a final package is irresponsible. We certainly cannot, in this House of Commons,