

Customs Tariff

cognizant of it. I would ask her to consider carefully what I am saying because I am also bound by procedural rules.

If the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood disagrees with anything that was set out by the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton, of course I will hear her. It is not the role of the Chair to allow this argument to go back and forth because some Member will get up, undoubtedly, and respond to some of the things the Member from Broadview—Greenwood is saying, and then we will have no end to it. The Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood.

Ms. McDonald: Mr. Speaker, one very particular area where I disagree with the presentation by the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton (Mr. James) concerns the scheduling of witnesses in September. There was a break over the summer. The committee chairman was directed to schedule witnesses as soon as possible in September—and he referred to that in his remarks today—but it took two organizational meetings to get the scheduling done. There was a great deal of obstruction. I did not blame the Hon. Member from Sarnia—Lambton for this obstruction. I recited it as one of the facts that impeded the work of my committee.

It should be clearly understood that his response today is an incorrect one. The record will show clearly that there was agreement that witnesses be contacted and a schedule set up. That was not done, which has impeded the work of my committee. I did not say that the Member bears exclusive responsibility for the fact that that work was not done because many Members bear responsibility for that, Conservative Members who were obstructionist in committee meeting.

I think I have been responding to the concerns that the Member raised. I conclude by saying that at no time did I state that he was the only person responsible, but I cannot agree with his presentation of the facts and I urge you to look at the proceedings for the committee meetings in question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will recognize the Hon. Member for Sarnia—Lambton now. I hope that he will take into account the comments of the Chair and direct his remarks solely to the issue which he is raising, which, as I understand it, is a question of privilege with respect to what he says is an allegation of bias.

Mr. James: Mr. Speaker, I think any indication, if it is not personal, is an indication of the Chair's responsibility in managing the committee.

As you deliberate on this matter I do not think you will find in the committee minutes any time where I have been challenged as being biased. In the management of the committee when there are interruptions of the witnesses, I think it is the responsibility of the chairperson to keep order.

I want also to bring to your attention a mistake in facts. It was stated that on five occasions a deputy chairman was substituted for the chairman and mention made of a Member

in particular who has bias. I would like to advise you, Sir, that at the point in time as of November 24 only three instances are recorded when the chairman designated another Member to act as chairman, namely, on November 15, 17 and 24. I want to notify the House unequivocally that the Member named by the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood was never designated as chairperson of this committee. That is another incorrect statement.

Mr. Speaker: I will hear the Hon. Member for Broadview—Greenwood but I would ask her to be as brief as possible.

Ms. McDonald: I will be very brief, Mr. Speaker. I do not have the dates in front of me but I attended committee meetings. My recollection is of a number of instances. Perhaps the proceedings of the committees do not show a substitution. I am referring to who was actually sitting in the Chair, not just who is designated for an entire period of time. The designation of a chair for part of a meeting certainly counts as a problem if that chairperson acts in a particular fashion and if it is a person who, for example, is in a conflict of interest situation on this subject.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

CUSTOMS TARIFF

MEASURE TO ENACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-87, an Act respecting the imposition of duties of customs and other charges, to give effect to the international Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, to provide relief against the imposition of certain duties of customs or other charges, to provide for other related matters and to amend or repeal certain Acts in consequence thereof, as reported (without amendment) from a legislative committee, and Motion No. 1 (Mr. Cassidy, p. 11346).

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa—Vanier): Before the House took recess at 1 p.m., Mr. Speaker, I was speaking to the Bill and dealing more specifically with the amendment moved by the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy) which would somewhat limit access to the Canadian market of goods coming from the United States, which had been wholly or partly produced in Mexico.

Clearly the Hon. Member is trying to change Clause 15 of Bill C-87, and I should simply like to indicate that we agree on the proposal, because not having seen the final text of the Mulroney-Reagan free trade or so-called free trade agreement, many claim that Canada would come out the loser on a deal such as this, because it is quite possible that the Americans, having gained access to the Canadian market, could export to this country goods with "Made in the USA" labels but which in fact would have been wholly or partly produced outside the United States, more specifically in Northern Mexico.