

*Customs Tariff*

Why is it 60 days? Would that not create a problem if Parliament does not happen to be sitting? The present legislation already covers that. It states that, if Parliament is not sitting within the 180 day period, then the resolution has to be affirmed by Parliament by the fifteenth sitting day after Parliament's return. For example, that might be during an election year. That would in fact apply in the case where we shortened the approval time to 60 days.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance suggested that this would interfere insufferably with the working of Parliament. I would point out that, under Clauses 23, 27, and 28 those resolutions are already covered by Parliament or are required by Parliament, so there is a form of accountability.

I do not recall these matters ever being treated as anything but routine. Therefore, I would judge that if we decided, for example, to give most favoured nation treatment to Albania, which I believe is now under the general tariffs, or withdraw MFN status from some other country because of a trade dispute, I do not imagine that if it were a routine matter it would take any parliamentary time at all. It would be a resolution passed in a minute or two. If there were some desire to discuss the matter, it could be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs or the Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade.

The experience in the recent past would indicate that my contention is an accurate one. The problem is that we now have the Government seeking powers in this Bill which would allow it to enter into a fundamental change, a Bill or agreement which would wreak fundamental change in our trading relationship with our largest trading partner. And through the back door, by means of this Bill, whose primary purpose is the harmonized system of tariffs, it is seeking to confirm for itself powers to do this without reference to Parliament. The Government's behaviour is reprehensible, and I believe it should be put on a short leash until it can demonstrate once again that it is worthy of the trust of the Canadian people, and it has some credibility in this particular area.

I heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) state in the House yesterday that no negotiations are taking place. But then on television I saw Mr. Murphy—Mr. Reisman went away by the garbage elevator—obviously rather emotional, upset and teed off at the situation, having come away from something which can only be described as a very tense and difficult set of negotiations.

We don't know whether they were negotiating the entire Auto Pact back, or down the drain, or whether they were negotiating in perpetuity that Canadian ship owners and sailors will never be able to serve American ports because of a perpetuation of the powers of the present Jones Act. But what I do know is that the issues must be pretty darned important that we got to 98 per cent of the deal being put into text some three or four weeks ago, and have gone no further than 1.5 per

cent in the ensuing three or four weeks. This is where accountability comes in. In such a matter as the Canada-U.S. trade agreement, which goes far beyond the routine, parliamentary accountability begins to have an impact.

I would draw to your attention as an analogy, Mr. Speaker, the situation that prevails with the new procedure about the reference of nominees to Order in Council appointments to the relevant standing committees of the House of Commons. The analogy is not perfect, because there is no power for the committees to actually confirm or refuse to confirm those appointments. Nonetheless, those appointments are referred to the relevant committee, and they lie on the table in that committee for a period of some three or four weeks or some shorter period, and the committees have the power, and I think it is accepted that the majority will not be used to stop that, actually to consider those appointments and whether or not they are appropriate.

One of the reasons that that procedure came in was to ensure or seek to ensure that political favouritism and patronage would not be the governing principle in making important Order in Council appointments.

Last night I had a few minutes in my office and I was going through my desk and came across a list of approximately 10 appointments referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. There were appointments to the Canada Development Investment Corporation of a Deputy Superintendent of Financial Institutions, and to Canada's associate or alternate Governor to the International Monetary Fund.

I looked through the biographies appended and the people appeared to be able. One was an East Indian Canadian who came from Uganda in 1972. It is noteworthy that someone who settled in this country should, in 15 years, have achieved the stature and respect in the community that he would be appointed to the Canada Development Investment Corporation. There were three able women appointed to different positions, something that I welcome. I made a note to my staff simply to say that I do not think we need to worry about these ones, and we do not need to call those people before the committee.

Likewise, the same applies to the power of resolutions. Normally those matters will not require any parliamentary time. But where the situations are abnormal, such as in the Canada-U.S. trade agreement, and where we are kept in the dark while vital decisions affecting every Canadian are made behind closed doors, under that situation, we have to reaffirm the principle of parliamentary accountability.

In Motions Nos. 4 and 12, which cover a broad range of tariff-making powers and of different trade and tariff status given to different countries around the world, we are saying that these should come before Parliament for resolution within 60 days rather than within 180 days, bearing in mind that when Parliament is not sitting it would be the fifteenth sitting day after Parliament resumed.