

things to be able to understand or comprehend something as vital as recommendations of the Canadian Import Tribunal.

• (1210)

I do not think there is any harm in allowing those reports to be available to the committee members who may or may not decide to do something with the information. The process would certainly be more open and available to the public if they knew what the recommendations were.

A few moments ago the Parliamentary Secretary was telling us that the ideal behind these amendments, namely, that the parliamentary committee have an opportunity to review appointments and regulations before they come into effect, is unnecessary because we have an opportunity now to call before committees, for questioning and scrutiny, proposed appointees. Those committees do not have the power to stop the appointment, they simply have the power to make inquiries. The Government and Cabinet are still in control of whether or not that appointment proceeds.

With regard to the issue of regulations already being fully observed, I think the Parliamentary Secretary was referring to the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations. That committee has gone through some name changes over the past few years, but its function has basically been one of looking at regulations as they come about and determining whether or not the Cabinet or Government complied with the laws of the land when they struck the regulations. That is all they can do. They cannot make comments on the appropriateness of the regulations and as long as the regulation is within the purview of the law of the land, there can be very little public discussion of the regulations prior to their coming into effect. This proposed amendment would permit that kind of comment and public disclosure to occur.

The regulations regarding agricultural standards are mentioned in Motion No. 50, which would require the committee to look at those prior to their coming into effect. This is especially pertinent because of the actions of the Joint Standing Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations or its immediate predecessor which found, after regulations had been in effect for quite a number of years, that in fact the regulations we were using to regulate the importation of certain fruits, vegetables, and agricultural products did, in the opinion of the joint standing committee, go beyond the powers which Parliament had granted the Government to use in the Acts concerning Canadian agricultural products standards. Parliament therefore had to amend those Acts to provide the Government with the powers it had need of and which the industry was convinced it should use in order to make those regulations legal.

The process takes a number of years. We have gone on with this process for eight or ten years. I believe we may have avoided that had there been a more open procedure, and had the committee been able to look at it prior to the regulations coming into effect and had the opportunity to discuss whether

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or not this was in fact a legal way to proceed. It could have questioned the objectives of the regulations and would have made Canadians who are in the business of trading back and forth across the border more aware of the thinking of the Government and of the process under which they would have to live.

I believe these proposals would go some way toward creating more open government and a more open understanding of what our trading arrangements are under this new agreement with the United States and would put us on a more equal footing with some of our counterparts across the border who have the opportunity to involve their politicians much more closely in trading decisions and trading relations than is the case in this country. Under our constitutional monarchy we have always attempted to keep such decision making within the Cabinet. When we get into a trading dispute, it is very difficult to find that political action is being taken almost immediately and in almost every case on the other side of the border, regardless of what is stated in the trading arrangement, whether in the current trading arrangement or the new one which we are now debating.

The Americans have a great advantage over Canadians in that they are always able, as exporters or importers, to call on their politicians in Congress to interfere on their behalf. We in this Parliament are not given the same kind of ability to interfere because we do not have the kind of constitutional arrangement which they have. These motions are moved in order to highlight the differences between the two systems and to try to make this very shabbily-built structure a little better. If we are going to be stuck with it, we would like to improve it in order that it might be of some use to Canadians.

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to re-enter the free trade debate. We have debated the legislation in the House before, but it goes without saying that we ought to continue to debate this legislation until the public is aware of the full implications of it and until the Government comes to its senses and decides that it is not in the best interests of Canadians and will therefore not proceed with it.

I would like to refer specifically to the nine amendments before the House at the present time. The first motion refers to the appointment of chairmen of the procurement review board. The next one refers to the regulations regarding the powers, duties, and functions of the procurement review board. The third requires that the Canadian Import Tribunal report to a Commons committee as well as Cabinet as to whether, as a result of tariff reductions, U.S. imports are causing serious injury to Canadian producers. The next motion requires committee approval for the establishment of dispute settlement panels and committees in the agreement. The next motion requires the appointment of the secretary of the Canadian secretariat that will administer the dispute settlement panels and committees. A further motion makes reference to the powers of such dispute settlement panels. The next motion