

Government Orders

• (1635)

It is not I nor my colleague from Verchères who said that, it is the Canadian Steel Producers Association who said it several times. It is for these reasons that we have a lot of difficulty, this afternoon, understanding why the parliamentary secretary and the government did not amend this bill.

The steel industry is very important, particularly for Quebec. In my riding and the riding of the hon. member for Verchères, there are many major industries producing steel pellets. Steel trade is very important in Quebec, and that is why we are very concerned by the government's lack of attention towards the steel producers who came several times to explain to us, in great detail, their claims.

Once again I strongly hope the government will change its mind because, once this legislation is tabled and sanctioned, we will be facing major problems. That bill will have a negative impact on the steel industry which, it seems to me, is still quite dynamic and full of promises for the future of Quebec and the rest of Canada.

That is all I wanted to add. I do not want to get into the specifics, but I urge the government to listen. It said it had reviewed the issue. On what basis? The parliamentary secretary said earlier that they had reviewed the question, but on what basis and on whose advice?

We have heard the exact opposite and, once again, the government is not listening. I really wonder where we are headed. I think we will continue to sink further into a terrible deficit with that type of regulations that do not protect industries, that increase unemployment and add to the problems of Quebec businesses, particularly in the steel industry, one that I know very well.

I beg the government to accept this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Speller (Haldimand—Norfolk, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on this motion as a past chair of the steel caucus. This is a caucus of all members of the House who have joined together to support the Canadian steel industry. My colleague from Oakville is the present chair, having taken over yesterday. She will guide steel issues through the House with the co-operation of all members.

The hon. member for Verchères, who put this motion forward, is a very active member of that committee and has taken almost word for word a proposal that was put forward by other members of the committee that represent steel industries.

Let me speak briefly about the intent of the motion. The steel industry felt it was important for it to send a strong message to the Americans that the present situation in which anti-dumping and trade actions are brought against Canadian steel industries

is not acceptable. If we are going to have fair, open and free trade, if we are going to belong to an organization like the GATT, the World Trade Organization, the WTO, then we need to follow similar rules. The steel industry in North America is so integrated that we need to have similar rules on both sides of the border.

The intent of this motion is to make sure that there are similar rules on both sides of the border.

• (1640)

Yesterday we had the opportunity to speak with the Minister for International Trade. I want to thank the minister for coming to the committee. We discussed this very issue. Unfortunately he only saw this after he walked into the meeting and did not have the opportunity to look at it. It was his view that the intent of the motion could actually be handled by regulation.

Unfortunately I did not have an opportunity to listen to the parliamentary secretary but I am sure that is what he meant when he responded to the hon. member. The minister gave us his commitment yesterday that he would look at this issue very seriously, make sure someone in his department would respond to our concerns and would work with the steel caucus so the intent of this motion is carried through. When Canadian steel companies or for that matter other industries want to do battle in trade disputes with companies in the United States they should have the same arsenal to work with.

I agree with the hon. member that the arsenal is not balanced now. Not only steel producers but other producers will tell you that it takes a heck of a lot longer to deal with a dispute in the United States than it does one in Canada. When they go to the United States they have to take a truckload of documents with them. But when Americans come here to deal with a dispute they just have to carry a briefcase full of documents.

If the values and the intent of the World Trade Organization is to bring down these sorts of barriers, then certainly industries, particularly the steel companies who employ thousands of workers in members' ridings across the country should have an opportunity to have fair trade.

I know that is the intent of the motion by the member for Verchères. I support the intent of his motion. We will work with the minister and members of the steel caucus to make sure that that intent is put forward as strongly as we can, and to work to make sure that through regulation the intent is carried on.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maud Debieu (Laval East, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are now on the last amendment presented by the Bloc Québécois. The purpose of this amendment is to amend, improve and clarify the bill to implement the Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization. Although the parliamentary secretary does