

that honourable senators would welcome the opportunity of obtaining knowledge of this subject in that way. I am going to suggest, therefore, that this be done. But I do not wish to be misunderstood. I shall welcome discussion; indeed, I would ask the indulgence of the house so that I may be given another opportunity to speak on this matter after I have heard—not for the first time—what the officials have to say about it.

I think at some early stage we should refer the subject-matter of this motion to a standing committee, where we could hear such officials as Mr. MacKinnon, who is thoroughly familiar with all its ramifications and is in a position to deal with all the multitudinous details connected with various industries and tariff schedules. In addition to officials of the Department of Trade and Commerce, I think we should invite the leading representatives of various Canadian industries to appear before the committee to give their impressions of the general agreement. I make this proposal because I feel that some honourable senators might like to avail themselves of that information before they present their views. It is my desire that the motion be introduced at the earliest possible moment, so that there may be the longest possible interval between its introduction and the time when it will have to be resolved and decided either in the affirmative or in the negative.

As honourable senators are aware, the discussion on the Geneva trade agreements is now proceeding in the other house. From what I know of practice there, I imagine that when that house resumes following the Christmas recess, the debate on the Speech from the Throne will probably take some weeks, and the tariffs and trade agreement will not be approached for some time. In the meanwhile I should like honourable senators to have the most complete information obtainable from the officials of the Department of Trade and Commerce and such other witnesses as honourable senators think should be called. In the meantime the resolution can stand until honourable senators see fit to proceed with it.

Hon. Mr. DAVIES: May I ask the honourable gentleman if there is any date by which this resolution must be passed?

Hon. Mr. ROBERTSON: There is no set date. It is almost in the same category as the Speech from the Throne. The actual date of enforcement of these tariff schedules is January 1, 1948, but parliamentary approval need not be given until such time as parliament sees fit to give it. I believe that some six weeks elapsed between the time the 1936

Canada-United States trade agreement came into effect and the time that it was ratified by parliament. There is really no time limit. I am not laying so much stress on the immediate schedules, because these things move progressively; but my honourable friend the leader of the opposition (Hon. Mr. Haig) has said that because of many escape clauses in the agreement, he was afraid it would be a long time before it would function. In reply to him I should just like to point out that twenty-three nations have been seized of the importance of doing something about the matter, difficult as the task may be.

In the past the Senate Standing Committee on Immigration and Labour has supplied this country with valuable information on matters of vital importance; therefore I would suggest that this particular question be sent to one of our standing committees. This would serve a double purpose: it would give honourable senators a greater appreciation of the various aspects of the general agreement and at the same time it would enable every interested person throughout the length and breadth of Canada to obtain whatever information was disclosed to the committee.

In considering this subject a host of questions enter the mind as to what its long-term implications will be. For instance, my honourable friend from Medicine Hat (Hon. Mr. Gershaw) brought up an important point in relation to the opening of a market for cattle in the United States. As I see it, if the restrictions on the sale of cattle were removed, our sales to the United States would be greatly increased. It might be asked, "Then, why not do it?" It is true that we want the dollars and that our farmers want the business—and I have no doubt that the Americans would not object to getting the meat—but there is a complication. There is the question of how we can maintain an orderly control of the cost of living, and minimize as much as possible industrial unrest. It is probably not beyond the ability of man to do this, but it is a very interesting subject for consideration.

In the long run, reductions in the American tariff will tend to bring the cost of primary products in this country to par with the cost in the United States. For instance, in future the Canadian consumer may have to pay for agricultural products much the same price as Americans pay. If that happens, and if prices of manufactured goods continue to be higher here than in the United States, Canadian consumers will be placed in a very difficult position.