

Export and Import Permits Act

majority. The hon. member for Eglinton has pointed out the import situation. What is really happening here is that the Minister of Trade and Commerce has a sort of vest pocket tariff power which he can carry about with him and use in whatever way he likes. It is far more than a tariff power, because an import quota or import prohibition is really more effective than any but the most extreme tariffs, indeed more than any tariff.

I do not think there is much to be gained by repeating this, by going around the course again. It would have seemed to me that there could be nothing more reasonable than to ask that these powers, which are extraordinary powers, should be considered in the most efficient manner we have available, which is by a standing committee. But as I say, the abnormal has become normal. The parliamentary assistant and his minister apparently have ceased to regard this as abnormal, have ceased to regard this as being an emergency. Although they did use the word "emergency", no attempt was made by the parliamentary assistant to point out what was the emergency.

We all know that 10 years ago there was an emergency; and, as the hon. member for Eglinton pointed out, even three years ago there was the post-Korean situation. But without even taking the trouble to give us a scintilla of evidence that there is an emergency now we are asked to deal with this bill in this manner. I rise merely to record my feelings of regret, but not of surprise, that we have again run into the usual stone wall.

Mr. Fraser (Peterborough): How many permits were issued for exports to countries behind the iron curtain during the last year?

Mr. Dickey: Those countries are all on the area control list and permits for the export of non-strategic items are quite freely issued, but the number is relatively small. We have no exact figure here, but it is available and can be secured for the hon. member.

Mr. Fraser (Peterborough): I should also like to inquire about imports of canned meats from those countries. I understand that a year or two ago they discovered in the United States that some canned meats which had come from behind the iron curtain were not fit for human consumption and had to be condemned. Are we getting any of that kind of meat in this country?

Mr. Dickey: There is no power under this act to deal with matters of health or of the quality of any product imported. The

[Mr. Macdonnell.]

particular matter with which the hon. member is concerned would come under the Department of Agriculture, health of animals branch. They have powers under the appropriate legislation to deal with a situation of that kind, but we could not deal with it under import control.

Mr. Fraser (Peterborough): Would not your department check before issuing an import permit for such food? The Minister of National Health and Welfare told me here in the house that this would come under the pure food laws. Meat packed in those countries might be packed under conditions that would not be accepted in this country.

Mr. Dickey: Actually canned meat or products of that kind are not under import control, and there is no regulation under this act respecting them. The main point that I should make clear is that the reasons for which import control can be applied under this act do not include reasons of the kind the hon. member has in mind.

Mr. Herridge: I should like to ask the parliamentary assistant a couple of questions. Can the importation of fruits, potatoes and other vegetables from the United States be prohibited by the use of this act?

Mr. Dickey: Mr. Chairman, if action is taken by the agricultural prices support board, for example, under the exercise of its responsibility and its authority, then that decision can be made effective by the issuance of an order under this act restraining the importation of a particular item dealt with by the agricultural prices support board. But there is no power under this act to initiate action to keep out a particular import.

Mr. Herridge: As I understand it, then, the price has to be supported first, and a recommendation then comes from the prices support board to the minister concerned for action under this act.

Mr. Dickey: That is correct. The appropriate board has to take the action available to it to provide price support, and then in order to make that action effective an order can be issued under this act. But it is not possible under the terms of the authority given in this act for initiating action to be taken to exclude some particular import such as fruit, vegetables, or anything of that kind.

Mr. Herridge: Would it be possible, then, that in some cases the government has denied price support to certain agricultural commodities because of the possibility of the use of this act under these circumstances?

Mr. Dickey: I do not quite understand the import of the question, but I think it is quite