

Customs Tariff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Motions Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11, which relate to parliamentary approval by either resolution or legislation, were debated together. A vote on Motion No. 2 will apply to Motions Nos. 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11.

The question is on Motion No. 2 standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Ottawa Centre (Mr. Cassidy). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Negatived on division?

Some Hon. Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Pursuant to Standing Order 114(11), the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred.

Motions Nos. 4 and 12 will be debated together, with a vote on Motion No. 4 applied to Motion No. 12.

Mr. Mike Cassidy (Ottawa Centre) moved:
Motion No. 4.

That Bill C-87, be amended in Clause 32 by striking out lines 13 to 16 at page 10 and substituting the following therefor:

"to sections 23, 27 or 28, the order shall cease to have any force or effect with respect to any period following the sixtieth day after the".

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-87, be amended in Clause 61 by striking out line 3 at page 22 and substituting the following therefor:

"sixtieth day from the day".

He said: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge to my colleagues that I was a bit confused about the vote that was just taken. Rather than intending to oppose what the Government was doing, I wound up temporarily in error by opposing my own amendment. However, I will vote in the appropriate way when the deferred division is taken.

I think that speaks to the complexity of these tariff matters. It proves that they are well worth considering by Parliament in its role as a place where there should be a certain amount of sober second thought on important matters which can have such far-reaching implications.

Presently, some 2,000 pages are being negotiated in the agreement between Canada and the United States at white-hot speed. Who knows what is happening behind closed doors, and in terms of parliamentary scrutiny, a matter such as this would normally go before a parliamentary committee. The committee and its staff, on behalf of members of different Parties, would be able to study it. There would also be opportunity for the general public to examine it as well. Of course, those things will not occur because of today's news that once again there has been a delay, and the goodwill that existed at the bargaining table seems to have disappeared. The negotiators have gone away feeling sour and sore at each other.

• (1230)

I do not know when we will see the agreement. Certainly, the Government's credibility in suggesting when it will come out is totally shattered. It seems to be an ever receding target as to when this will come out—at Hallowe'en, in mid-November, or on December 1.

Mr. Orlikow: January 1.

Mr. Cassidy: Now it might come out on December 10. Or my colleague, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), suggests that it may not come out until January 1, or even after it is signed.

Let me return to Motions Nos. 4 and 12. Motion No. 4 refers specifically to Clauses 23, 27, and 28. I was a bit surprised when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Vincent) rose and stated that Parliament would obstruct actions taken by Canadian officials, by the Government of Canada, when it came to important trade actions, for example, the need for surtaxes or retaliatory actions in the case of some trade dispute with another country. Surely the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary knows that that is not the case. That is why I indicated to him in interjecting that what he said was *absolument faux*, it was absolutely untrue.

It is not the actions that are being dealt with here, it is the question of the accountability to Parliament. Clause 32 already requires approval by Parliament within 180 days. In other words, the principle of parliamentary accountability is there with respect to changes in the tariffs under Clauses 23, 27, and 28 of the Bill.

That means that if Canada extends or withdraws a most favoured nation tariff to another country for any or all goods—that is covered in Clause 23—that that must now be submitted for approval by Parliament by resolution within 180 days, or it lapses. It means that if Canada extends or withdraws a British preferential tariff to another country for any or for all goods, the Government must get approval from Parliament within 180 days, or else it lapses. It means that if Canada gives to any country that is presently under the British preferential tariff a more favourable treatment—that would be a less developing country, probably in Africa—then there too that is subject to parliamentary approval within 180 days. The principle of accountability to Parliament is an important one. The question referred to in my amendments in Motion Nos. 4 and 12 is simply whether the approval should come within 180 days or within 60 days.

I would argue that, on the basis of what we know about the Government's lack of trustworthiness and its lack of credibility in terms of making promises to Parliament, and through Parliament to the Canadian people, it is incumbent upon us to review the question of whether 180 days is an adequate time, or whether Parliament should not be called upon to act sooner, in other words, in these particular and important clauses and actions, whether the accountability to Parliament should not be tightened up and reaffirmed.