

*Customs Tariff*

tariff provisions contained in the former Canada-New Zealand-Trade Agreement of 1932 to reflect the Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement which has replaced the old agreement. Discussion at committee stage focused almost exclusively on this provision, and I make reference to the following items because I fear the people following that limited debate might have thought that was all the Bill touched upon.

● (1650)

A second major provision of the Bill affects the introduction of a number of improvements in the general preferential tariff for developing countries. It is interesting that that provision should follow upon discussion of Bill C-130 just debated by Parliament. Many Members, I am sure, would join in support of this feature of the Bill, that is the reduction of the general preferential tariff, for the same motivation that prevailed in discussion of Bill C-130 in support of developing countries and their economies, and for many of the same reasons.

The third provisions of the Bill is the establishment of a tariff item which will provide duty-free entry for goods specially designed for the use of disabled persons.

Fourth, the Bill provides—and this is a significant area—the introduction of a new tariff schedule of goods used by dentists or dental laboratories.

Fifth, the Bill has provision for authority for the Government to convert existing units of measure in the Customs Tariff from Imperial to metric following industry practice. I would like to take the opportunity to say that is done in order to facilitate those industries that have already made the change, to metric. This change in the legislation will assist trade practices presently in place.

Sixth, there is the introduction in the Bill of a number of miscellaneous tariff changes in response to many representations received from interested parties right across the country.

In dealing with the Canada-New Zealand Trade Agreement, as Hon. Members know, there are a number of purely technical measures in the Bill relating to the new Trade and Economic Co-operation Agreement between Canada and New Zealand. This Agreement provides for the continuation of certain existing preferential rates accorded to New Zealand under the 1932 Agreement to which I have referred. Bill C-90 brings the Canadian legislation up to date by repealing the 1932 Trade Agreement and related clauses in the Customs Tariff and replacing them with new provisions to reflect the Co-operation Agreement.

I would underline the description of the Agreement, that of a Co-operation Agreement, because that was a point touched upon by Hon. Members opposite at the Committee hearing. They asked what was different between the new Agreement as opposed to the old Agreement. The significant change is the wish of both countries to accentuate and improve relationship in terms of enhancing mutual interchange and identifying potential future product areas where the two countries would find opportunities for sale in each other's country.

I would emphasize that these amendments do not involve any change in the tariff rates on goods from New Zealand but rather deal with process and improved co-operation.

Questions were raised during Committee consideration of the Bill about the extent of consultations in preparation for presentation of the legislation to the House. Indeed, I was asked what consultations had taken place and why Members opposite would support the Bill in the absence of provincial agreement or consultation with affected industries.

I would like to take the opportunity to supplement my earlier comments by advising that an interdepartmental team of officials held a series of meetings right across Canada in 1981. They met with representatives of provincial Governments and representatives of the business community concerning the Canada-New Zealand Agreement of 1932. Discussions were held at the following times with officials of all Provinces. I am advised that New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island considered discussions unnecessary. However, the following consultations took place in 1981 with the respective provincial officials: with British Columbia on February 11; with Alberta on February 12; with Saskatchewan on February 13; with Ontario on February 16; with Quebec on February 19; with Nova Scotia on February 22; with Newfoundland on February 23; and with Manitoba on February 26.

In addition to these meetings most of the Provinces had of their own initiative recently sent trade missions to New Zealand. None of the Provinces was opposed to the Government's initiatives aimed at seeking increased trade opportunities with New Zealand. In addition to consultations with the Provinces, meetings were held with some 40 industries or companies seriously interested in developing market opportunities in New Zealand. Approximately 100 briefs were entertained and considered by the Government in preparation for legislation.

Specifically, the Hon. Member for York-Peel did inquire about lamb imports. I was not able to give him the specifics of the consultation in preparation for continuation of treatment under the tariffs of that product, but I am pleased to indicate to the Hon. Member today that the lamb producers did express some concern about the continued tariff treatment. Their main worry, I understand, was that the producers group was concerned about exports to Canada of fresh-chilled lamb carcasses. The Canadian Sheep Council has met directly with the New Zealand meat producers group. They concluded a private agreement, which I understand continues until November 12, 1983, to restrict the import of that product into Canada.

I might add further that no representation subsequently has been made to the Government on this topic. Certainly none has been received since the introduction of the notice of ways and means motion which led to the introduction of Bill C-90 which is before the House today.

Hon. Members of this House are aware of the important role played by the preferential tariff systems introduced by Canada and other developed countries in assisting the growth of exports and balance of payments positions of developing countries. I mentioned that in my opening comments. This Bill