

Customs Act

As the Prime Minister has indicated in his remarks, the subject can be brought under review again at the time the estimates are discussed and arguments can be put forward then with regard to further amendment, if necessary, even within the course of the present session. If a time limit were to be considered, I think it should be a time limit such as is ordinarily imposed, which would bring us within the certain period that this could be dealt with while the house was in session. For those reasons and without in any way indicating our approval of the wording of the government amendment, I would hope that this proposed motion will not be adopted.

Mr. Castleden: In supporting the motion, with all respect to the Prime Minister I should like to point out that when this measure was first introduced, it was as something of a temporary nature. I think the situation in Canada with respect to our export trade requires constant review by every member of the house. It is quite evident today that things are changing rapidly and that our present policies with regard to export trade might be quite different one year from today. This amendment is intended to give the House of Commons the opportunity of reviewing this measure or reviewing this bill so that one year from this date, if the situation requires changing, a change can be made.

Canada is moving off a war economy. We are moving rapidly into a peacetime economy when export markets may be the thing upon which Canada will depend for any measure of prosperity. Our industries from coast to coast are going to find themselves in competition with mighty keen operators in every other country in the world, particularly the United States to the south of us, whose exports are to a large extent very similar to our own. Therefore anything which affects the trade of our country with the United States, or anything which affects our export trade with any other country, must receive serious consideration; and that trade will be affected by any steps we take with regard to their goods coming into this country. From what has happened within the last three months it is quite evident that the first guns of a major tariff war have already been fired, and that Canada had better be watching herself closely.

The Prime Minister also spoke of the responsibility of the government and of the Liberal party to the people of this country who put them there. I should like to point out that every member of the House of Commons is to some extent responsible for what

[Mr. Drew.]

happens here. I think he has the responsibility of stating whether or not he is supporting this measure or supports giving to the minister these powers without any opportunity of review other than discussion when the estimates come up for consideration. In view of the powers that are given here, in view of the members' own responsibility, and in view of the fact that we are facing a situation wherein all Canadian industries are going to have to depend on exports to maintain their operations, I would earnestly suggest to hon. members that this act should come up for constant review, and I would support it on those grounds.

The Chairman: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Coldwell: May I just say one word, Mr. Chairman. The Prime Minister says there is some difficulty about the date in the amendment. Would the Prime Minister be prepared to accept a suggestion of this description, namely that the measure should be reviewed, shall we say, within fifteen days of the meeting of parliament in 1954; that is, the first meeting of parliament in 1954?

An hon. Member: In 1955, the hon. member means.

Mr. Coldwell: That would probably be January or February, 1955.

Mr. St. Laurent: No, Mr. Chairman. I do not think this legislation should have the guillotine put on it in that way. When the estimates are under discussion, there will be opportunity for discussing it, the way in which it is administered and the effect which it will have produced. Someone has said, "Oh, you might delay those estimates until the end of the session". I am quite prepared to say that no attempt will be made to delay consideration of the estimates and to say that, if it were desired, they could be among the first things to be considered.

The operators of these textile mills who are feeling the brunt of this competition at the present time should, I think, be given whatever this will produce as a stabilizing influence upon their decisions without there being a cut-off date automatically fixed.

Mr. Coldwell: Of course I meant 1955, although I said 1954.

Mr. St. Laurent: I understood that what the hon. gentleman meant was the session that would follow this session.

Mr. Coldwell: Yes.

Mr. St. Laurent: That is the normal session that would follow this session.