

Government Orders

uents' needs and working on them and, second, from solving problems quickly. This is an important concern.

This 1985 Gulf Canada report also says that, with time, more and more citizens are trying to make themselves heard by the government. This is nothing new. It has always been difficult for citizens, businesses and groups to know to whom they should address their complaints to get their problems solved. That is why this motion provides for the Committee on External Affairs and International Trade to act as a forum, pursuant to Bill C-57 concerning the new World Trade Organization, to receive those complaints and to make the necessary recommendations to the minister so that he can respond quickly.

Opening international trade will bring about very important changes. Surely, in some industries, it will directly affect employment and businesses. Some adjustments should be made swiftly.

No structure was put in place to hear the claims of businesses, individuals and groups. We think, as this motion says, that the Committee on External Affairs of the House of Commons could and should be the place to deal with these claims so that we can adjust as quickly as possible to the important changes and economic disruption expected in the years to come.

[English]

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake, NDP): Madam Speaker, the purpose of the amendments brought forward by New Democrats today is to commit the government to reporting to Parliament regularly on its activities in the World Trade Organization and especially on the progress toward the development of a social clause to the WTO. In this way we can keep the momentum going for a social clause by ensuring that the public spotlight is kept on the government's policy on this important issue.

A social clause is needed so that the WTO can address not only classic trade disputes between nations but also the problem of what has become known as social dumping, that is a nation's competitive advantage that results from unregulated labour markets and lack of environmental protection regulations.

During the Marrakech conference where the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations drew to a close, expectations were high that the final text of the agreement would include a social clause.

• (1120)

Although the Americans and the French were pushing hard for one, nothing came of those negotiations. The Minister for International Trade was quoted in the press at the time as saying that he was lukewarm to the idea.

The purpose of the amendment is to get a categorical commitment from the government to be actively involved in the development of a social clause in the WTO agreement.

The idea of a social clause is one which enjoys wide support around the world as a necessary counterweight to the liberalization of investment. As a constitution for the new world order of the global marketplace, the WTO agreement as it stands is remarkably one sided in its defence of the rights of investors and silent on the rights of workers. It pretends that labour, social security and the environment are not trade issues.

It is eloquent about the multinationals' right to intellectual property and to the free movement of capital but says nothing about the workers' rights to form trade unions or to have a safe workplace. It speaks loudly about level playing fields but is silent about the most important playing field of all, the one between the employer and the employee.

A social clause is needed to strike a balance between the market efficiencies of liberal trade and investment practices and the social solidarity of all communities that want basic human rights and decent employment practices enforced everywhere where capital is free to come and go.

The multinationals can and do now operate outside the regulatory reach of individual states. We must in partnership with our trading partners establish some way of restoring the abilities of communities to set the ground rules for the marketplace. An unregulated global market effectively allows the multinationals to hold an auction to see which countries will bid the cheapest and least regulated labour and the most lax environmental standards in order to get their investment.

If we do not establish some basic rules about the labour markets and environmental protection, globalization will certainly remain what many observers have called a race to the bottom.

This is the view of the International Labour Organization secretariat which earlier this month recommended to the governing body of the ILO that there should be a social clause to the WTO. This is also the view of the joint committee that recently reviewed Canada's foreign policy. Its report included a recommendation that there should be a co-ordination of international labour and social standards.

I look forward to hearing the views of the members of the committee who can support this amendment as a way of putting their recommendation into action.

During the recent visit of Team Canada to China and the Prime Minister's attendance at the APEC conference in Indonesia, the Prime Minister claimed that the best way to address the problem of human rights abuses in China, Indonesia and elsewhere was to engage in trade to open up these societies. There is nothing in the WTO that prevents countries from joining the WTO, trading with member states and continuing to abuse human rights,