

Customs Tariff

I ask that she be allowed to continue presenting the facts without argument. That is what she is doing. I think the Government is being just a little bit too irritable.

Mr. Lewis: No, we are just fed up with the abuse of this Standing Order.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has again raised the practice and the rules with respect to a concise statement being made by the Hon. Member seeking an emergency debate. I was listening very carefully and watching the written text I had in front of me. I must say I did not feel, at least up until the point when the Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) was interrupted, that she had strayed. She was perhaps setting out some additional facts, but they seemed to be consistent with the point made in writing. However, the Hon. Member for Hamilton East has the sense of the House and I know she would want to be brief. I can assure her that I think I understand the issue she is raising.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I would just like to point out for the record that even since I served notice of this motion, the Government has gone from a position of doing nothing to a position of today issuing a health alert warning Canadians not to eat any oysters, clams or mussels. I understand that also includes lobsters. I have already had calls to my office from Atlantic Canada on the issue of an over-all alert against all shellfish from Atlantic Canada, whether they be domestically-cultivated or wild. Given that, the Speaker can certainly understand the gravity of the situation.

The Minister can also understand that we in the Opposition are a little confounded when, on the one hand, the Minister has done nothing for several weeks, and, on the other hand, he comes down with this over-all ruling.

I would like the Speaker to consider an emergency debate which would allow us to get the facts on the table. We know Canadians are in hospital. We know some are in comas. One has already died. We believe that it is critical enough that there should be an emergency debate.

• (1230)

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member. As Hon. Members would expect, I have given this application very serious consideration earlier today and while representations were being made by the Hon. Member for Hamilton East. That it is a serious matter is, I think, accepted by all Hon. Members. I think all Members would accept the fact that it is being treated very seriously by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) himself.

I have considered extremely carefully the proper basis upon which an emergency debate ought to be allowed. It is not the intention of the Chair very often to give indications of the reasons for its rulings in such matters because, as Hon. Members know, the reform commission felt that it was perhaps not helpful for the Speaker always to give reasons. The thrust of the Hon. Member's complaint is the conduct of

the Hon. Minister and also some concern about procedures within the Department.

Both of those matters may well be extremely important, but given that there have been a number of days of extensive exchange in Question Period in which the Chair gave Hon. Members every possible latitude in asking questions, and in view of the fact that, as the Hon. Member for Hamilton East points out, some action was taken some time ago and further actions have now been taken, I find that I cannot accept the application as one which contains those factors which ought to be shown before an emergency debate is ordered.

However, I say to the Hon. Member for Hamilton East that that does not mean that the Chair looks lightly upon the issue at all. It is just that under these circumstances it would not seem appropriate to the Chair to order an emergency debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CUSTOMS TARIFF**MEASURE TO ENACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Hockin that Bill C-87, an Act respecting the imposition of duties of customs and other charges, to give effect to the International Convention on the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, to provide relief against the imposition of certain duties of customs or other charges, to provide for other related matters and to amend or repeal certain Acts in consequence thereof, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Lewis: Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the Parties. I wish to advise the House that when the vote is taken on Bill C-87, the business presently before the House, the Government intends to call no further government business this day. I think you would find consent to move immediately to Private Members' Business at that time and proceed with the one hour's debate, or less, whatever it happens to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Stan J. Hovdebo (Prince Albert): Mr. Speaker, when I had the floor before Question Period I was making the point that we believe this Bill has become much more important than it was in the past since the Government has decided to establish an economic union between ourselves and the United States. As a result of that it is much more important that Parliament have a say in how tariffs are established. Consequently, it is important that we ensure that our position on this Bill be well established.