

The province of Quebec has especially important interests here since 60 per cent of the jobs provided by the textile industry are found in that province. There thus exists, between the industry's maximum and minimum needs in Quebec, a margin of 53,000 jobs indirectly created by the textile industry. Those figures represent about 20 per cent of the new employment opportunities in the province during the next five years.

In 1969, the textile industry in Quebec came fourth as to the value of its shipments, which amounted to \$650 million. Most of the plants are located in the Eastern Townships and in rural areas where it would be difficult to create new jobs immediately, or a relatively short time, should we have to deplore further lay-offs.

I trust, Mr. Speaker, that the bill before us will notably improve the conditions prevailing in the Canadian textile industry.

This bill, like all the others, is not perfect of course, because there is no such thing as perfection. We shall have to be careful and provide for the corrections required from time to time, because nothing is permanent. We must always strive to improve our living conditions and the laws of our country.

In the past, the government has been timid in its interventions and each delay in intervening caused the situation to become worse. So I hope that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce will show more firmness in the future and I also take this opportunity to urge him to introduce a similar measure to deal with the situation which now prevails in the shoe industry in Canada.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): The hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau).

[Translation]

Mr. Louis-Roland Comeau (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, we have been looking forward to Bill C-215 for a very long time. Textile products manufacturers have long been expecting the government to pass legislation that would help them out.

I am personally interested in this bill because in my constituency there is a textile manufacture providing employment for approximately 600 people and apparently, it is the largest in the area.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) last night delivered a lecture rather than a speech on the textile industry. We had the impression that he was speaking before university students, but nevertheless he explained to us what has occurred in the textile industry. He mentioned that Canada took part in a fair in Germany in 1970 and that it helped open a market of some \$10 million for our Canadian production.

Also, he referred to our exports to the United States, to our participation in *Fashion Canada*, but I simply cannot understand how a minister can come before the House and say that everything is rosy in this industry, when he knows—

Textile and Clothing Board Act

An hon. Member: Everything is in the red!

Mr. Comeau: —maybe, when he knows full well that this industry has and will have problems in the future.

I hope this bill, to which I do not object, will solve those problems and place the textile industry on a sound footing.

Last week, the Ministers of Labour and Finance (Messrs. Mackasey and Benson) also said that everything was rosy when they discussed unemployment. Cabinet members are wont to talk this way and take such a position.

Mr. Prud'homme: They are optimistic.

Mr. Comeau: This is all very well, but one must be realistic also. It is true that Canadian products are better than imports, and textile manufacturers must be commended.

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce referred to the consultations he had with representatives of other countries, and he said that he did not want to take a stand unilaterally.

[English]

The minister boasted about the fact that Canada is the first country to provide protection from injury. Well, it should provide protection from injury in this particular industry because Canada is being gypped. The people in this whole industry should be protected because they are being gypped. This is the only country which has to protect its markets because it is the only country which is really being gypped. The minister warned members, and he was referring particularly to members of the opposition, not to feel that this bill was too protectionist. Who in this instance is opposed to protection for our own industry and its products? I suggest the minister was not warning the members of the opposition, but rather was warning some of his cabinet colleagues because he knows very well he had to fight with his colleagues on this measure. He knows that for two and a half years he tried to bring forward such legislation but was unable to do so because the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang), the Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. Richardson) and others opposed him. I am not afraid of protectionism but some of his colleagues are. I want this Canadian industry and its products to be protected. In the two and a half years I have been here, we have urged the minister to take action. The hon. member for Calgary South (Mr. Mahoney) mumbled something, but I did not hear his remark. The minister, a great university man, gave us a course on textiles.

• (2:50 p.m.)

Mr. Pepin: A much needed one.

Mr. Comeau: He has had previous occasions to refer to textiles.

An hon. Member: What about the hon. member in the red shirt?