

Customs Tariff

can be expected to come to judgment. The industry is, by and large, a small town industry. Very often, even today, it is the industrial backbone of semi-rural communities. It is currently giving employment to several thousand Canadians and affording the means of sustenance to their families. Partly because of its long association with scores of localities, it is part of the warp and woof of Canadian life. Often, in its own area, it provides the only openings for skilled or semi-skilled labour.

That is an enunciation of the importance to the Canadian economy, in particular to certain sections of the economy, of the wool cloth industry as it now exists. But did the tariff board do anything? Did they recommend anything to maintain the position of the industry and keep it healthy? It admits that it has not, because on page 44 one finds the further statement that the board is not prepared even to recommend tariff treatment that might within reason be expected to keep the industry in being and as a going concern for an indefinite period in the future. So with all the bad things which flow from what the government is now doing, those who work in the woollen industry cannot from the words of the tariff board take very much encouragement from what is being done, because the tariff board says in effect that little or nothing should be done to save this industry.

As our nation progresses and as we improve our technology through the years certain industries are bound to be adversely affected; certain industries are bound, if nothing else is done, to become depressed industries. The textile industry is certainly not the only industry in Canada which is being affected in this way; we know that this applies to the coal industry and to the gold mining industry. With fixed prices their costs go up, and the gold mining industry is having greater and greater difficulties.

We in the C.C.F. have great sympathy, not for the companies, not with respect to their profit and loss statements and not with respect to the return on investment, but we have sympathy for the people who work in those industries. We feel, as was said in a previous debate, that when the government undertakes to institute policies ostensibly to help an industry, as it has done for example in the gold mining subsidy, consideration should be given to whether or not such help will result in an improvement in the position of the workers in that industry, and will not be pocketed by the company so that the workers from that point have to negotiate with the company to try to get, if they can, a fraction of the aid given.

I would like to see a full national inquiry into the textile industry, into the coal industry, into the gold industry and into the other depressed industries in this nation. I

[Mr. Argue.]

would certainly include agriculture, particularly on the prairies, as a depressed industry.

An hon. Member: The pulp and paper industry?

The Chairman: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but we are not at present dealing with matters concerning general conditions in the gold industry, the pulp and paper industry or any other industry. We are at present discussing a resolution with respect to the textile industry, and I would ask the hon. member to please confine his remarks to that resolution.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, I had been saying that I felt a full scale inquiry should be made into our depressed industries, and I had in mind in the first instance the textile industry, which is the industry we are discussing by way of this item. I have mentioned certain other industries, but I agree that any extensive statement or reference to other industries would be out of order under this item.

What I was endeavouring to say was that I would not wish to see one policy adopted for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) for adopted for other industries which are also depressed. The objective I would have in recommending such an inquiry would be to enunciate a policy based on whether, after full investigation, it was felt that the industry should be maintained at its present level or that it should be expanded or contracted; but that in any movement of Canadian resources into or out of such industry there should be full consideration of the effects in order to make certain that there should be the minimum of hardship suffered as a result of any changes made.

I believe that if adequate plans were made it would be possible for workers, when their transfer became necessary to some other industry, to effect that transfer without any loss of their property or standard of living. What happens now is that they are sacrificed by the industry which is in difficulty, and there is resultant human hardship. Even if the tariff is increased by the government it is not likely, as stated in the report, to result in any real alleviation of such hardship. In the past the C.C.F. has moved motions in this house asking for inquiries to be made in somewhat the same way I am now proposing in order to see whether or not some type of insurance could be set up to be used by people engaged in industries obviously depressed, and where the maintaining of such industries at their present levels was questionable.

The C.C.F. has given a good deal of thought to the whole question of the textile industry on many occasions in the past, and while I do not want to bore the committee unduly