

age 54 who can show that over the last 15 years they were associated with the textile industry for at least 10 of those years, and who can establish by certificate by the Department of Manpower and Immigration that they are individuals for whom there is no suitable work in the community, will be eligible for this pre-retirement plan until age 65. The benefits are geared to their average income while they worked in the industry up to a maximum of \$75 a week with an escalation clause similar to that which exists under the Canada Pension Plan.

[Translation]

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-215 gives me the opportunity to comment on the conditions now prevailing in the textile industry.

I do not intend to speak at great length, because I know that certain members of my party also want to take part in this debate.

I think that without sharing the enthusiasm of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) on the effects of that legislation, we will give him our support just the same, since we do not want to be accused of practising obstruction and making things more difficult for the textile industry.

For a long time, Mr. Speaker, the problem of the textile industry has been drawn to the attention of the House and it is unfortunate that the government has put off for so long taking the steps necessary to its settlement.

I will mention later the representations which were made to the minister and to the government and left pending or considered futile.

If the textile industry is currently in an incredible slump, it is because the government did not assume its responsibilities and showed indifference toward the industry.

My long association with textile workers and the importance of this industry in my riding compel me to speak rather harshly to the government and to my hon. friend, the member for Drummond and minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. I hope he will not construe my remarks as a personal reproach. I appeal to him in his capacity as Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and representative of a constituency where, again, the textile industry plays so important a role.

I do not hesitate, Mr. Speaker, to say that the government has failed in its responsibility, in its duty to the manufacturers, employers and employees of the textile industry. This industry, Mr. Speaker, in the emergency periods we had to face in the past, played a prominent role and, were it not for the superhuman effort made by textile workers during the last war, history would certainly have been entirely different with regard to our armed forces overseas.

This industry deserved better attention for its past performance and I now say regretfully to the minister that his government has failed lamentably in its duty.

Textile and Clothing Board Act

Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mack-asey) said last Monday will surely generate a certain pessimism in the textile industry as well as among the workers engaged in this industry. For instance, let us read his own words as reported at page 2507 of Hansard:

It takes a degree of courage for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to say to the textile industry of Quebec: "If you want to survive you must rationalize your industry. You must accept automation and technical change..."

Mr. Speaker, I cannot but make this comment: the remarks of the Minister of Labour were thoughtless or he was talking about a situation he knows nothing about.

The textile industry has substantially improved its equipment since the last World War. Millions of dollars were spent to bring it up-to-date; it can now boast of the same technological facilities as any other industry.

● (12:30 p.m.)

It is regrettable that the Minister of Labour comes so close to insulting the workers in the textile industry and the manufacturers of textile products by telling them they are dragging their feet and are unable to keep up pace with progress.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour should have inquired before making such statements.

And as reported at page 2507 of *Hansard* for Monday, January 18, he went on to say:

"You must let us help you rationalize your industry, even if this puts 50 per cent of the workers in the textile industry out of work temporarily."

Thus, it would seem that at least 50 per cent of the labour force in the textile industry is to be dispensed with.

It is regrettable that such statements are made because they will spread panic among the workers as well as the employers in the textile industry.

I quote further:

It takes courage sometimes to create unemployment. We have created unemployment in the textile industry and we will probably create it temporarily in other industries as we automate and as we rationalize these industries.

So now, Mr. Speaker, we are entitled to wonder whether, after implementation of this legislation within the textile industry other industries will not have the same fate, whether the government will not be taking them over.

In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, we have evidence that the present government wants to take over all industries, beginning with this one.

That is most unfortunate and I hope that before going further the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce will reconsider his plans.

Mr. Speaker, the textile industry is not just any kind of industry, but one which provides thousands of jobs.

The first textile plant was established in Quebec in 1827. Today, this industry is a source of income for