

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Ralph Ferguson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, in the very limited time I have I want to indicate that in my particular constituency we have instilled a sense of pride in our native people. Last Friday we opened a new cultural administration centre built by the native peoples themselves through the Government of Canada NEED Program. We opened a new community centre a little over a year ago, again built by the native peoples. Part of the furniture in this building was supplied by a native peoples woodworking factory established in yet another reserve close by. I look at the progress made by the band counsels in my particular constituency and their involvement in every-day decisions that affect their life. They have indeed come a very long way. They have acquired a sense of pride so necessary in today's world.

[Translation]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hour provided for consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired.

● (1800)

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 45 deemed to have been moved.

TRADE—EFFECT OF CLOTHING AND TEXTILE IMPORTS. (B)
REQUEST THAT MINISTER MEET INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. Dan Heap (Spadina): Mr. Speaker, the answer given by the Minister in response to the question which I asked in the House a couple of weeks ago completely missed the point. He indicated that information about the importation of beef would do instead of information about the importation of clothing. This is how seriously the Cabinet seems to take the very grave situation in Canada's clothing industry.

About three years ago the slogan of the Government was to let industries like clothing, textiles and footwear go because they are losers, and instead to boost the winners, the megaprojects and the high tech industries. The megaprojects flopped a few months later when the price of oil dropped and high tech industries have mostly evaporated and never would have provided any serious quantity of jobs in any case. The Government policy seemed then one of rising permanent unemployment. If that was the policy, it has been a resounding success for the Government and those who like high unemployment as a means of holding or driving wages down.

In the clothing industry the Government's policy has been to increase imports. In fact, imports have been increasing during the past three years at the rate of 20 or 25 per cent per year. The main increase comes from countries where wages are often less than \$1 an hour. The Government chooses to blame

Canadian workers for wanting more than \$1 an hour in wages. There is no evidence to support the Government's assurance that these products from very low wage countries are a benefit to Canadian consumers. Apart from that fact, a Canadian worker has very little chance to consume when he or she is unemployed, especially after running out of UIC benefits; apart from that fact, the prices are not substantially lower than Canadian made goods.

Three years ago the Government adopted a new plan. It established the CIRB, the Canadian Industrial Renewal Board, which was supposed to renovate the clothing and textile industry. It is very difficult to see what it has done for employment. In fact, the board has no manufacturers in the clothing, textiles or footwear industries on it. It is predominantly a group of financiers, civil servants, some with backgrounds in banking, two or three manufacturers in the metals industries, a couple of trade union representatives and one former consumer association representative. It is very unclear what this is doing for the clothing and textile industries because there have been only piecemeal reports of the grants they have made to various industries and no progress reports about what was achieved through those grants.

Almost a year ago a task force was promised. It was finally appointed in February. There is still no word from this task force as to what it will recommend. Presumably the task force is meant to keep a lid on the question until after the next election.

● (1805)

In May the Minister of International Trade (Mr. Regan), being questioned by the Hon. Member for Welland (Mr. Parent), admitted the problem is that in the last couple of years there has been a great proliferation in the number of sources from which various types of textiles have been coming. He assured us that "our staff is establishing agreements with all these countries that", according to him, "are satisfactory". I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that according to the manufacturers in Spadina and in other places, some of whom have gone out of business because of the uncertainty engendered by this Government's policy, those agreements are not satisfactory, nor are they satisfactory to the unions.

Two weeks ago the whole question was laughed off by the acting Prime Minister who undertook not to make any difference between clothing and meat. What we need is a completely new start on our policy. We need to consider the value of producing as far as possible the things we need here in Canada, such as clothing, and providing work for the people of this country at jobs they are capable of doing. We used to have at least 200,000 capable workers in the clothing and textile industry. That number is now down to 150,000 or less. We still have many of those skilled workers on layoff. We have a capable workforce. We have the raw materials and the market. We ought to be developing that industry positively rather than following the Government's policy of undermining it and causing it to disappear.