

Textile and Clothing Board Act

legislation, each with the power to urge measures upon the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce which in their total could make us one of the most protectionist countries in the world, with obvious consequences for our exporters. With the difficulties which Canadian exporters are already experiencing, including those which have arisen from our floating—perhaps I should say bloating—Canadian dollar, the government should not be embarking on courses which could well set off anticipatory reactions amongst our trading partners, particularly in the Pacific area.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Much has been said in our country, Mr. Speaker, in these past, uncertain months about the need to foster Canadian unity. We in western Canada cannot be unified with central Canada if we are to be separated by tariff walls. We have acted in good faith in understanding the needs of other parts of Canada and now we must insist that the same good faith be extended to our needs. If the government damages relations with our major trading partners through measures such as those proposed in the present bill, we can only conclude that western Canadian alienation from the Canadian union will be further enhanced.

Mr. Normal Cafik (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, in reviewing this bill for a brief moment, I want to say that I am fully in agreement with its intentions. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs of this House which reviewed this bill in considerable detail. I think that it skates the very difficult route between the interests of textile manufacturers and those of the consumers of textiles in Canada, and I think it does this very well. I think that through the establishment of the textile board, the bill will make it possible for action to be taken to rationalize the textile industry in the interest of both the consumers and the manufacturers.

One thing concerns me particularly at this moment and I hope in his concluding remarks that the minister will touch on the question of adjustment assistance for workers. Clause 21 of the bill almost parallels a similar legislative provision connected with the auto pact under which transitional assistance benefits are made available to people displaced as a result of the operation of the auto agreement. What concerns me is whether the decision of the textile board as to whether or not people are qualified for these benefits is subject to appeal. I know that in the case of the auto pact there are no such provisions within the act itself; and, indeed, there are no such provisions for appeal within the bill we are now considering.

I pursued this question in the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. When I did so, the minister indicated that he would take my views into consideration and, in the House, indicate whether appeals would be allowed by trade unions or representatives of employees if new evidence was available to show that they should, in fact, be granted such eligibility. I hope that the minister will assure this House today that those

groups will actually be given an opportunity to appeal decisions made by the textile board in connection with their eligibility. Provided that assurances are given that appeals will be heard if new evidence is available to indicate that they should be granted that eligibility, I would be quite prepared to support this bill enthusiastically.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, the members of the New Democratic Party supported this bill on second reading. Having seen the bill through the committee stage, we are now prepared to support the bill on third reading, despite some reservations which I shall attempt to set out in the course of my remarks.

Basically, we consider that this is a new step which represents an innovation on the Canadian scene in trying to find solutions to the problems that face the textile and clothing industry. We wish the government luck in its program, and we will be watching the actions of both the government and the board very closely as they attempt to grapple with the difficult problems facing this industry. While we have some reservations on some aspects of the bill, nevertheless we believe it represents a step forward in government policy. I think it should be noted here, as it has been during the committee hearings, that there is a possibility that, on the basis of the experience gained through the operations of this board, the principle involved may be extended to other fields of industrial activity in Canada. We hope that this proposal will be of assistance in finding a solution to the very difficult problems of the industry concerned. I think it should be noted that the government has a particular responsibility, in view of the very wide ranging policy considerations involved, to deal with the problems with which we are confronted in the textile and clothing field.

Of course, we shall have to deal with conflicting interests, and there are some difficult conflicts of interest to contend with as we attempt to find a sensible and reasonable solution to some of the problems before us. We must take into account the fact that we want to see a viable textile industry in Canada. On the other hand, we must also recognize that we trade with the rest of the world, and that Canada is greatly dependent on trade for the carrying on of its economic activities.

Some conflicts of interest have resulted in concerns which have been expressed, both on the floor of the House and during committee hearings. In particular, those concerns have been expressed by some hon. members who are involved with and concerned about the situation affecting western Canada. I speak as a member from western Canada. Concerns respecting questions of trade and respecting, particularly, agricultural products have been raised in the discussion on this bill. Most of these concerns arise with respect to the degree of protection which will be afforded to the textile and clothing industry as a result of the activities that will be carried on by the proposed textile and clothing board. Concerns and fears have been expressed as to how these will affect the economic interests of people in other parts of Canada. For instance, in western Canada people are concerned about

[Mr. Ritchie.]