

centage of our local market. Then, we can import. Otherwise, we will risk the danger of destroying that industry, increasing unemployment and adding to the sad state of affairs whereby Canadians produce less and less and consume more and more foreign goods.

I deplore the fact that in the last few months big chain stores, such as Eaton's, for instance, seem to be buying directly from foreign manufacturers of footwear, instead of ordering them from importers, which saves them another 30 to 35 per cent. Those chain stores should remember that they live off the income of Canadians who, to buy the goods they need, have to work; we certainly will not achieve that goal if we destroy our industries through our imports.

It is far from being proven that imported footwear is preferred by Canadians both for price and quality or durability. But that is not the point. The point is whether the government is prepared to let Canada see its industries go down, and let this country become a consumer of foreign products, or whether we accept the challenge immediately by bringing back to the surface our viable industries and becoming again a productive country, by consuming first our production and even setting export goals afterwards in areas where that is possible.

I appreciated a lot the brief submitted sometime ago by the Canadian Shoe Manufacturers Association before the Canadian committee on trade and commerce and customs tariffs. It proposes in particular that the government reduce imports to a reasonable proportion, that it take immediate steps in the area of maintaining customs tariffs, that it extend the jurisdiction of the Textile and Clothing Board to footwear and that it initiate negotiations with other governments to come to an international agreement governing the footwear trade and including the setting of a quota.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to have to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him is now expired.

Mr. Marcel Roy (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I want first to commend the hon. member for the interest he showed about the footwear industry. May I be permitted to refer him now to the statement made by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Jamieson) on November 20 last on the sectorial strategy of the tanning and the footwear industries and of which a study report was tabled in this House on December 21, 1973. In reply to his question I want to inform the hon. member that the implementation of that strategy which includes several elements and measures which are closely related is moving forward at a satisfactory pace. The hon. member suggested this problem was not new but I would like to take this opportunity to explain the solutions which are now new to deal with this problem. Those steps that I mentioned will have an effect on international trade and will ensure the protection of the footwear industry in Canada. For example, under the trade policy included in that strategy the government took various steps to help Canadian manufacturers, and here are a few examples: leather footwear was exempted from the general preference condition; second, the Department of National Revenue has noted on four occasions that shoes

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from certain countries were undervalued and that this affected the prices on the Canadian market—action has since been taken in this regard; third, manufacturers obtained tariff reductions on three occasions on materials not available in Canada. Several cases are now under study.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that while this sectorial strategy applied only to the leather footwear and tanning industries in the beginning, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce is now considering extending its advantages to the rubber footwear subsector. This action follows the annulment, on August 28 of this year, of the general preferential tariff for rubber footwear and the reinstatement of the most favoured nation 20 per cent tariff.

As the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce stated on November 20 of this year, the government will continue to examine periodically the status of the footwear industry and to determine if other action is required in the future.

I therefore congratulate the hon. member for the interest that he has shown in this important industry. Moreover, as other members also said during the Liberal party caucus, we should continue to review regularly the situation of the footwear industry in Canada.

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS—DATE OF DECISION ON BILL TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEE ON WAR PRISONERS AND WIDOWS' PENSIONS

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, November 20, as recorded in *Hansard* at page 9274, I put this question to the Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. MacDonald):

In view of the fact that the President of the Privy Council has assured me on four or five Thursdays in a row that a certain matter is under consideration, can the minister tell us whether a favourable decision has been reached with respect to it? I refer to the bill to implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs concerning Canadian veterans who were prisoners of war and concerning the provision of pensions to veterans' widows?

The reply of the Minister of Veterans Affairs was in these words:

I can confirm the statement made by the House leader but that is as far as I can go today.

That was last Thursday and this is Monday of a new week, so I am hoping for an answer tonight.

● (2210)

I am most grateful to the Minister of Veterans Affairs for being here for tonight's late show. I suppose there are times when members on the opposition side of the House use the question period, or even the late show, to try to embarrass some unco-operative minister, but I assure the Minister of Veterans Affairs that that is by no means the attitude with which I address him on this question. I believe he is every bit as anxious as I am to get this legislation before parliament. I suppose if I were to put to him the question I really want to pose it would be this: what can we do to help the minister to win this battle with his colleagues who make up the cabinet?