

within the last 24 hours Junior Footware announced they would be closing their plant in Markdale and Mount Forest with a loss of 150 jobs in each instance. I referred this problem to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce this afternoon and I appreciate his indication that he is willing to look into the matter. I hope he will do what he can to protect those jobs. In the small community of Arthur where Bell Thread is the major industry, it has been forced to cut back substantially on employment because of uncertainty about the government's textile policy caused by the importation of cheap textiles.

● (2110)

The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce today launched into a lengthy and partisan attack on our party and a very strident defence of his government's policy as it concerned the textile industry in Canada.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): A defence of the indefensible.

Mr. Beatty: A defence of the indefensible, my colleague from Ottawa-Carleton says.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Grenville-Carleton.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): He does not even know your riding.

Mr. Beatty: It will not be very difficult in Ottawa after the next election because they will all be Conservative.

The minister made mention of the fact that this afternoon he spoke at a luncheon to the Canadian textile industry in Montreal. He said they concluded by giving him a standing ovation. I can understand the audience getting to their feet, but not for a standing ovation. More than likely they were getting ready to leave. Perhaps it may be worth while to put on record a letter from one of the people in the audience, the president of Bell Thread. It reads as follows:

Further to my recent letter calling your attention to the serious condition that exists in the textile industry, mainly because of imports from the U.S.A. and low wage countries.

I regret to advise the situation has deteriorated as far as Bell Thread is concerned. One department has been closed permanently causing the loss of 25 to 30 jobs and other departments are also being severely cut back causing a further loss of jobs. In addition, we are now on a four day work week. Needless to say this is creating hardship to our employees and their families.

How can one plan with confidence for the future with this type of situation? Here we are on a direct contraction course when it should be one of expansion to create more job opportunities. We are mindful some efforts are being made by the government through certain recommendations, but we have seen no direct benefit.

I might also add at the present time the Clothing and Textile Board is conducting an inquiry into injury caused by imports. We hope you will do everything possible to assist our cause when this is presented in the near future.

May I respectfully once again request your co-operation to ensure the Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Hon. Jean Chrétien, is fully aware of our precarious position. If we allow these imports to continue at the present level, then one wonders how much longer our industry will survive.

That is the reason I raised this question in the House of Commons a week ago. The jobs of literally tens of thousands of people throughout rural Ontario are in jeopardy, but the

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government does nothing more than sit on the sidelines and issue news releases. In fact when I directed my question to the minister more than a week ago he suggested that I read his news releases issued over the past few weeks. I do not doubt that the minister issued news releases. However, I suggest that the issuance of copious news releases does more for the pulp and paper industry in Canada than the textile industry.

I talked to members of the industry in my constituency about the problems from which they are suffering. They made a number of points. It is worth contributing them to the debate because I hope there will be an open public debate in Canada. They stressed the fact that the exchange rate of the Canadian dollar was much higher than the American dollar, making it easier for foreign competitors to compete in our market. Time after time they were faced with the situation when shipping to foreign markets that their goods were subject to duties but there were no tariffs on goods in their lines being shipped into Canada.

A case in point is Uniroyal in Elmira, which manufactures agrichemicals. In many ways a company in the agrichemical business would be better off locating in the United States. They could ship into Canada without being subject to tariffs, whereas if they ship from Canada to the United States they are subject to tariffs. In addition there is the exchange rate on the dollar and the lower productivity in Canada.

The same situation applies in the case of companies which supply the auto industry. Throughout rural Ontario jobs are dependent upon supplying the auto industry. What has the record been under this government? The share of the market controlled by Canadians has been in a steady decline. It is worth looking at the figures. With regard to supplying parts to the automotive industry in Canada, figures made available by the U.S. International Trade Commission show that between 1963 and 1975 the percentage of the contribution made by Canadian industries or Canadian captive industries declined from 42 per cent to 18.2 per cent. This is in the Canadian market. The percentage contribution of the United States industries or American captive companies increased from 57.8 per cent to 83 per cent in 1975. Unless we give protection to Canadian industries in the Canadian market, there is no way they can survive.

My time has pretty well run out. However, I think it would be worth while to summarize the matter. Our party is concerned about the government's record in the whole field of trade, and its propensity to secrecy. Canadians are entitled to an open government. They are entitled to be consulted about the government's plans for the future. We believe industry has the right to have some confidence in future planning and some knowledge of what the government's policies will be.

We intend to do whatever we can in the House of Commons to bring pressure on the government to open up the doors, to allow Canadians in, to let them see the government's policies and to know the plans of the government. We intend to do what we can to provide a competitive position for Canadian industry, both in the Canadian market and abroad.