

The Address—Mr. Blair

At all events, since it is possible and even desirable to amend our constitution so as to enable the authorities to levy indirect taxes in certain set fields, on a list of goods previously agreed upon and respecting which there will be no interference from the federal government, I believe that, until that problem is solved with the unanimous consent of all the provinces, it is still preferable to accept, as a result of agreements of a temporary nature between the federal government and the provinces, a solution under which, during a fixed period of five years, subsidies may be granted.

In short, Mr. Speaker, this constitutional problem is extremely important for us, in the province of Quebec, and I think that it ought to be discussed in a serious and objective way, considering the facts as they are and not as we would like them to be, and without dealing with the constitutional problem in an imaginary sort of way, which is now costing millions of dollars to the province of Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the members of this house as well as to those who might have read the speech I delivered yesterday and today. They may have found mistakes in grammar. I hope no notice will be taken of them. I had no notes and the late hour at which corrections were made was such that I was unable to do the job perfectly.

(Text):

I wish to endorse the remarks of my colleague from Beauharnois-Salaberry (Mr. Cauchon) in regard to the problem of textiles in general.

In my constituency, as in the whole province of Quebec, the crisis which prevails at present in the textile industry creates serious unemployment. About 200,000 male and female workers are employed in the primary and secondary textile industry in Canada, 100,000 of them in the province of Quebec. A large number of those workers are out of work at present, and many others work only three days a week. Bitter complaints are voiced about so-called American dumping of goods, even if the Americans dispose of their surplus production in a way which does not expressly contradict the definition of dumping as stated in the Geneva agreements.

I am aware that the government intends, while complying with the definition set at Geneva, to resort to a stricter application of import control methods. I certainly approve its action in the interest of the working population of my constituency and of the whole province of Quebec.

Fears are also expressed, and with reason, by the textile industry with regard to the next commercial treaty between Canada and

Japan. Last year, when Japan was not favoured by a preferential tariff, we imported \$13 million worth of goods from that country. Out of that amount, there were about \$9 million worth of manufactured products, including \$2 million worth of textiles. On the other hand, Canada exported to Japan more than \$103 million worth of goods, including about \$1 million of manufactured products not counting alcoholic beverages.

It is obvious that Canada must accept Japan's proposal to adhere to the Geneva agreements, if we are to keep on trading with that country. It is normal for Japan to seek to increase her textile exports to Canada; unhappily it happens at a time when our industry is faced with a serious crisis. It would be advisable to insert into the Canadian-Japanese treaty a restrictive clause concerning textiles, if we want to avoid the utter dislocation of one of the leading Canadian industries.

Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I would express the wish that the House of Commons may adopt the system of simultaneous translation in both official languages of this country. I believe sincerely that the time has come to have French-speaking members take a more lively part in the debates of the house. A prominent politician once voiced the opinion that French-speaking members seemed to seldom take part in the major political issues of Canada. This exaggerated opinion stems from the fact that one-third of the members must follow the debates in another language and cannot express themselves as readily in that language as in their mother tongue. Other members before me have offered such a suggestion which should be greeted with sympathy by all those who wish to see Canada take a further step on the road to national unity.

Mr. W. G. Blair (Lanark): Mr. Speaker, may I first congratulate you on your elevation to the high position of Speaker of this house. We know that you will carry out your duties with efficiency and with dignity.

Today the Canadian textile industry is caught in the throes of a difficult situation not of its own making. Government policy conceived more than a decade ago, and blindly followed ever since, has left this important manufacturing enterprise in a precarious position.

In the years following world war II this industry spent a great deal of money to modernize plants and for some expansion in the hope that it would grow and prosper with Canada. It did for a time, but when the recession struck in 1951 the weakness of our national policy became only too evident. The industry could not stand up under the