

Customs Tariff

that by making this gesture at this time they will fob off the pressure on them from certain of their backbenchers; that may be one explanation. The other explanation is that they really believe this is an intelligent, constructive policy calculated to give Canadian self-sufficiency or something approaching self-sufficiency in the woollen industry.

The Minister without Portfolio, the hon. member for Greenwood, speaking in the budget debate described this industry—I thought he was rather shamefaced in doing so—as an indigenous industry. It is rather difficult to think of any industry that is much less indigenous. The raw material comes from abroad; the machinery in the plants come from abroad, and the skills originally came from abroad. It is certainly not by any stretch of the imagination an indigenous industry.

What is being proposed, if it is seriously intended and if the government gets away with it this time, is to provide really high protection and really to make us self-sufficient in woollens at the expense of other Canadians. If that is so I would say we are embarking upon a most dangerous course. We should know now whether we are embarking on that course. It does not matter whether you look at this from the point of view of the generality of Canadian consumers or from the point of view of those particular industries that depend upon markets abroad—the United Kingdom, Italy and Japan are the three principal exporters to us at the present time of woollen goods—it seems to me that this policy is folly. It is contrary to our interests.

I do want to say something too, though very briefly because the Leader of the Opposition has already mentioned this, about the opportuneness of this gesture. If I recall correctly, we listened from about 1950 or 1951 to hon. gentlemen who now occupy the treasury benches talking about a commonwealth economic conference. In season and out of season, every time they could find any excuse under the rules for doing so, they talked about a commonwealth economic conference.

Some hon. Members: Order.

The Deputy Chairman: I shall have to ask the hon. member not to continue discussing the economic conference.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am not going to discuss the commonwealth economic conference, because I have always preferred to discuss things that have happened rather than things that have not happened. As I was saying, in season and out of season in this house, hon. gentlemen opposite when they were on this side talked about the way in which the Liberal

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

administration was discouraging commonwealth trade. They did this at a time when we were doing what?

Mr. Pallett: Nothing.

Mr. Pickersgill: We were lending hundreds of millions of dollars to maintain British trade with Canada after the war; removing restrictions one after another every year, and attempting to encourage trade with the United Kingdom in every way. Yet what do we find as the first positive—no, it is not positive; if anything it is more negative—action of this government? The first thing this government does, and they do it on the eve of a commonwealth conference, is to kick the British in the teeth and say we do not want your exports; we only want you to buy from us. We will let you export things to us if we are getting them from some other country.

Now, if it means anything at all that is what this step is calculated to do. It is calculated to reduce what the Leader of the Opposition pointed out was the biggest single British export to Canada, and what is their symbolic export to Canada. It seems to me we are being asked to embark upon a fundamental change in policy. The last time we did this—and this is another reason why I am opposed to it—was in the month of September, 1930. I sat in the gallery up there and watched Mr. Bennett introduce the first big increases in tariffs. We saw what happened. The trade of this country declined until it became a trickle; that is what happened.

In 1935 we embarked upon a different policy, a policy of expanding trade by every possible means. We saw that year after year our trade expanded. It would appear that in this furtive fashion we are going back to that Tory course again that will lead us into the position in which we were in 1933, 1934 and 1935. It seems to me that we in Canada should not take this dangerous turn.

(Translation):

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Chairman, coming as I do from one of the main textile centres in the province of Quebec, St. Hyacinthe, where that industry counts 18 factories, and being myself a textile employee, as I worked in one of the most important plants of St. Hyacinthe, the Goodyear Cotton Co., I cannot refrain from saying a few words on a subject dear to my heart.

I would have liked to speak in English, after seeing the crocodile tears just shed by the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill), but, as my notes are written in French and I have only a few minutes at my disposal, I shall express myself in French.