

successful in locating the problems. They have also rendered great services, and doubtless the Textile and Clothing Board will help to solve some of the problems of that industry.

But let us not believe all problems will be solved by setting up the Board. Otherwise, it would be too easy to solve problems overnight. Some problems are very complex and require not only technical knowledge but also the co-operation of all interested parties. I hope the minister will get the co-operation of all the parties concerned, the industry and the unions.

The people concerned as well as the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce are already aware of the problems with which the Textile and Clothing Board must first come to grips, because serious studies have been made these past few years by people interested in the textile industry, including unions, management associations and various services of the Industry, Trade and Commerce Department.

As a result of these studies, briefs were submitted on a number of occasions to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce in order to request various types of government intervention. The briefs contained full details on the performance of the Canadian textile industry, the problems it had to cope with and the future outlook.

Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of repeating all the statistics contained in these briefs in order to convince the minister how imperative it is that decisions be taken to help an industrial sector which is vital to Canada and particularly to Quebec. I think the minister knows all the details and that he is showing the textile industry his good intentions by introducing Bill C-215.

On the other hand, one should not triumph too fast. To my knowledge, for three years now, we have been making pressures on the government in the House and asking the minister to do something before it is too late.

As for myself, I think the government was slow in making decisions and there are others who feel the same way. The management-labour committee of the Canadian textile industry has already expressed its impatience at the slowness of the government to state its textile policy. The establishment of the Textile and Clothing Board is a step ahead, towards taking stands that I hope, will help to solve at least part of the problems.

In Canada, we have at the present time, some 200,000 workers in the textile industry, almost 60 per cent of them in Quebec. The decisions taken will therefore have a great importance for those workers directly dependent on the above-mentioned industry.

I would also like to point out that the textile industry buys considerable equipment and services from other industries, which means that a great number of workers in other industrial sectors are indirectly dependent on the Canadian textile industry.

This leads us to believe that the Board established under Bill C-215 will be permanent. In this connection, I urge to the minister to see to it that the Canadian textile

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policy is not developed solely by a Board. I can understand that the Board may make recommendations and appreciate the situation, but the reason for the existence of that Board is, in my opinion, to apply the policy that the government will develop for the textile industry.

Many times in the past the textile industry has experienced difficulties and if we were to eliminate all the industries that have had difficulties at one time or another I wonder how many would be left in Canada. For this reason, I can easily believe that the Board, through its advice, will be able to assist industrial concerns.

I also suppose that the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce will continue to help, through its Textiles Division, so that the Board's decisions do not turn out to be administrative ones only, because further amendments to our textiles policy will be needed from time to time due to the changes that occur and that bring about or will bring about temporary or permanent difficulties for certain sectors of the textile industry.

• (2:30 p.m.)

One of the first tasks of the Board will be to make recommendations concerning the measures to be adopted in order to protect the producers of textile products and clothing against the competition of imports from countries where production costs are low or where export subsidies are provided for textile products.

In the past, we have tried to cut down imports by charging customs duties with a view to increasing the cost of imported goods. Later, exporting countries were asked to adopt quotas, in order to limit their own exports to Canada. All these measures proved inadequate and total imports increased steadily, so that not only Canada, but even the United States, were obliged to pass stringent measures to protect their own textile industries. This is to say that the textile problem is not particular to Canada, and that the measures we used to take are no longer effective. It is therefore necessary to provide for other measures relevant to the present situation. Owing to the constant increase of imports in the last decade, our textile industry's share of the domestic market has declined to 58 per cent during June, 1970. Such is, briefly, the situation.

Among the means available to the government to stem imports from low cost countries, there is the voluntary restrictions system negotiated by the two parties concerned. Now, the normal voluntary restrictions that Canada has always favoured in respect of normal imports have always turned out to be inadequate with regard to abnormal imports. As long as we were dealing with the old prewar commercial structures, traditional measures proved efficient enough. Customs duties being more or less normal, the customs administration having at its disposal basic means of action, it was generally possible to maintain within reasonable limits international competitiveness as far as textiles were concerned, without having to resort to exceptional measures. There were however, a few weak points where customs duties were shown to be inadequate requiring the intervention of