

However, this debate will have allowed us to identify important questions. The first one, raised by the hon. members for Saint-Hyacinthe (Mr. Ricard) and South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) was about the nature of the Board itself. What are its power, its functions? What is this Board supposed to do? The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe seems to believe that the Board is going to launch a wide inquiry into textile products; such is not the case. The Board will have to pass judgments on specific, concrete cases and in a very short period of time. It will be necessary to correct that impression as soon as possible.

The hon. member for South Western Nova has wondered: Why set up a Board? Could not the government itself not take those decisions as soon as possible, immediately? What he suggests is the system we already have, and it has not worked that well; otherwise, we would not have Bill C-215. We think it would be advisable to formalize all this a little, to create machinery that will study these matters in a manner a little more open, a little more independent than up to now, on the basis of some better defined criteria.

Another series of questions will deal, at the committee stage—as far as I can judge from the debate—with the requirement of bringing concrete plans to the Board. The hon. member for South Western Nova, once again, asked himself the question. If it is merely a matter of modernization, why, he said, should the Board insist on the companies' plans being submitted? Here the hon. member for South Western Nova underestimates the importance of the adjustments to be made. If adjustments are to be made it will be absolutely necessary for the Board to know these plans and to supervise their application, otherwise it will not be possible to know whether required changes are taking place or not.

• (4:20 p.m.)

[English]

Questions were raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) and the hon. member for Winnipeg-North Centre (Mr. Knowles) having to do with the assistance program. I welcomed the fact that both hon. members seemed to say this was a rather good program.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): A step in the right direction.

Mr. Pepin: I think the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) will welcome that judgment. Both those hon. members asked the question, if it is good for the textile industry why would it not also be good for other industries which are at times in the same predicament. This is an obvious question and we thought about it seriously. During our considerations at the committee stage, I assume we will consider at some length the concept of government responsibility. It is not always easy to identify the government as being responsible for a specific change.

Let me give a rather far fetched example. If the government of Nova Scotia decided to build a road which

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happened to pass a mile or so away from the old road, would the government be responsible for losses suffered by those people operating gas stations on the old road which motorists would not patronize as often as they did before? Again, the concept of government responsibility is a very difficult one to assess. In attempting to define in the bill this responsibility for assistance, we decided there were three areas where this government responsibility would come into play. We have them in the bill.

Again there are divisions along philosophical lines. Hon. members of the NDP say they would immediately give full application to this principle of assistance to workers in industries damaged somehow by government action. They would implement the whole principle immediately. What will happen in respect of this measure and how it will be used in the future is very important to us on the government side. If it works well and we find that reasonable use is made of this workers' assistance program, it may be that the idea will become more or less generally accepted and applied to other cases.

Let me come now to the suggestions of the hon. member for Coast Chilcotin (Mr. St. Pierre). Among other things, he laid some emphasis on the fact that the government of today will carry a very substantial responsibility for the success or failure of this measure. I could not agree with him more but I should like to expand a little bit on that idea. It is not only the government of the day that will be responsible for the way this bill will be used; its success depends also on the imagination, the dynamics and the interest employers will demonstrate. It is also important that the workers react to this legislation in a favourable way. I am being absolutely frank when I say that circumstances will also have a lot to do with the manner of implementation of this measure.

The hon. member, along with others, has made the point that this bill may not be implemented or used in exactly the same way under varying circumstances. There is no doubt in my mind that this is a simple truth. In difficult circumstances of unemployment, for example, the measure will be used in a slightly different way than if we had hundreds of jobs that could become obsolete. I am being very frank, as I think this is the right thing to do at this time. That is why I keep repeating that this bill provides a philosophy, a direction and creates a framework for decisions. As the hon. member suggests, its success depends on the sense of responsibility of the government, of the unions, and of the employers.

It seems to me that industry and unions are pleased with the fact that some framework is being created. I feel ill at ease when I hear people suggest that this bill is a protectionist bill, and I feel ill at ease when they say it is a very liberal bill, one that will create unemployment. In my view both positions are wrong.

Mr. McCleave: Time will tell.

Mr. Pepin: Those are exactly the words of Mr. King of Domtex "time will tell", after he read the statement of