

Textile and Clothing Board Act

• (3:00 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**TEXTILE AND CLOTHING BOARD ACT****PROVISION FOR ESTABLISHMENT, INQUIRIES, REPORTS,
ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE FOR WORKERS**

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce) moved that Bill C-215, to establish the Textile and Clothing Board and to make certain amendments to other acts in consequence thereof, be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Gordon Ritchie (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, on rising to speak on Bill C-215, an act to establish the Textile Clothing Board, I should first like to make some general comments regarding the basic liberal philosophy which surrounds so many of the current problems facing the country. I would commend to all hon. members on the opposite side of the House a book written by that distinguished spokesman for conservatism, William F. Buckley, entitled "Up From Liberalism." One of the chapters in Mr. Buckley's book is entitled "The Liberal—and the Obliging Order," sub-headed "Our Age of Modulation." Mr. Buckley has several interesting things to say. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the age of liberal modulation is in no way better illustrated than in the liberal lexicon for describing current social phenomena. For instance, it is most revealing to note that no longer do our societies have ghettos, but rather in the liberal view we have "centres of ethnic concentration," and so on.

I have made these introductory remarks merely to illustrate that once again this confused manner of liberal thinking is present in the bill now under consideration. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) refers to the bill as having the purpose of "rationalizing" the textile and clothing industry in Canada, whereas in every eventuality, as I believe all hon. members on this side of the House know, the result of the bill will be to build a high protectionist tariff wall, particularly around low cost cotton imports.

I wish to quote a few passages from an editorial entitled "Protection Will Out" which was published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 22, 1971:

Any doubts as to Mr. Pepin's attitude should be dispelled by his response as minister to various proposals for modifying the bill. Since it first appeared there has been much criticism that it goes too far, even on the doubtful premise that something more should be done for the textile industry...In consequence, various amendments were offered when the legislation was reported back to the House. Their purpose was not to destroy the bill; merely to remove or ameliorate some of its worst features. It would have been quite open to Mr. Pepin to accept any of these or to propose acceptable substitutes. This is a perfectly normal procedure; the government would have lost nothing by following it and might have gained marks for good sense.

What happened? The first amendment on Thursday was in the name of Gordon Ritchie and called for regional representation on the new clothing board. The method proposed may have been imperfect but the intent—of providing a consumer voice—was clear enough. Mr. Pepin rejected this out of hand...

The next two amendments were offered by G. W. Baldwin. In these cases the intent was even clearer. It was to limit the new textiles legislation to textiles. For the astonishing thing about

[Mr. Speaker.]

the bill is that it is not so limited. Under the guise of helping one afflicted industry, it opens the way to general restriction by order in council. One section of it refers to the anti-dumping act, using the words: "in respect of any goods other than textile and clothing goods." Thus, if there is injury—or even threat of injury—to manufacturers not in textiles, the government will be able to rescue them too by placing the offending goods, on the import control list. For Mr. Pepin, that is a convenient arrangement. He turned down the amendment.

Mr. Baldwin then moved to delete clause 27 of the bill, which refers to the Customs Act, again using the word "goods". The purpose here is to reinforce the government's method of blocking imports by imposing "voluntary" quotas on other states.

As Mr. Baldwin judiciously observed, there is no more connection between that clause and the inherent principles of a textile bill than there is between rapeseed and immorality. But again, it provides a weapon of convenience for a protectionist minister and Mr. Pepin would not tolerate its removal...

With this in hand and no one upset (apart from knavish importers and long suffering consumers), he will be able as minister in charge of trade and commerce to revert to the congenial task of lecturing a wayward world on the evils of restrictionism and the superior morality of freer trade as practised preferably on a one-way basis by this enlightened nation.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that Bill C-215, simply reflects the fact that certain sectors of the Canadian textile and clothing industry are uncompetitive with their counterparts in other countries of the world. Following from that summary of the problem, we must then look to see what proposals are being put forth in this bill to remedy the situation, what the people who are most actively engaged in the industry think their basic problems to be, and what their assessment is of the likelihood of these problems being overcome in the foreseeable future.

During the course of the examination of this bill by the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs of which I am a member, we had the opportunity of hearing a number of expert witnesses representing different and contrasting viewpoints on the implications of this proposed bill. A number of them also commented at length on the state of the Canadian textile and clothing industry. One such witness was Mr. G. L. Bruck, President, Bruck Mills Limited, who appeared before the committee on February 18, 1971.

The hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafk), asked Mr. Bruck if he thought there was any real hope of the Canadian textile industry becoming competitive in the international market in Canada. Mr. Bruck responded as follows, and I quote:

Well, my answer is "yes", we are competitive with most countries in the international field and I mean truly competitive. We are not complaining about what is happening to us from importations from the European countries, or even the United States. We feel that with the present tariffs, although they are not terribly high, they are adequate, and we have to learn to operate within these limitations.

To say that we must be competitive with Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Mainland China, or any of these countries, well, that is drawing a rather long bow. I am not quite certain how they are going to get up to \$3.00 an hour salaries and other such fringes. Let us wait and see.

Mr. Bruck was asked further if he did not think that the real problems of that portion of our textile and clothing industry which face the greatest competition