

Textile and Clothing Board Act

from countries where people work in conditions and for salaries which would be illegal in Canada.

I take this opportunity to commend the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) for introducing Bill C-215 and I sincerely believe that this unique initiative will remedy many existing problems.

• (3:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Robert McCleave (Halifax-East Hants): I would not ordinarily have entered the debate, Mr. Speaker, but on January 20 the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) spoke to the Canadian Importers' Association in Montreal, and speaking to that august body he said:

What is needed is knowledge, judgment, wise reconciliation of conflicting interests, proper balance of advantages, the play of competition, consideration for economic, social, political, even ethnic, national, regional, professional factors.

Having delivered himself of that mouthful, the minister will, I know, need a great deal of help. He will not get it from his side of the House, so perhaps some of us on this side should offer it to him. I shall be putting forward an argument for a great deal of flexibility in the program the minister has offered. While some of the points he has made appeal to me a great deal, others do not.

I am worried about the implications of technocracy and bureaucracy in this bill. I am also worried lest at a time when we are facing tremendous economic problems, we may not be setting up machinery responsive enough to meet the demand. So I shall be putting in a pitch for a little company which does not even belong to the riding of Halifax-East Hants; it exists in the riding of my hon. friend the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) in Halifax. But it is a plant which is very close to my own home. It employs a few people and it could employ a few more. I refer to Maritime Canvas Converters and Upholstering Limited.

Ordinarily, I would take up a subject like this in committee when the bill goes there for consideration. However, the trouble with that approach is that you can be a statesman there, but nobody knows you have either raised the problem or that there is one to be raised, whereas I would hope that *Hansard* for yesterday and today would at least have some circulation and would be almost required reading for anyone who has an interest in the textile industry in Canada. Other speakers, including the minister, have mentioned the impact the textile industry has on our way of life. I shall not go over that ground again. I quote again from the speech which the minister gave in Montreal on January 20:

Canada imports about \$700 worth of goods per capita per year while the United States and Japan imports goods worth about \$180 and \$150 per capita, respectively.

Those figures are worthy of attention, especially when it is considered that Canada properly takes its place with the two countries mentioned in that quotation when it comes to the standard of living of our citizens. So we are talking "big league" when we discuss the export and import situation in this country, and "big league" indeed

[Mr. Portelance.]

when we deal with the difficulties imports can create for our domestic industry.

I suppose the minister is one of those twentieth century technocrats who are not as well versed in history as they should be. But there was a time 100 years ago when another Liberal government was in power during a recession. That was the government of the good old stone mason, Alexander Mackenzie, and in opposition was Sir John A. Macdonald, possibly the greatest Canadian who ever lived. It was a time of recession. It was also a time of insensitivity on the part of Alexander Mackenzie, caught up in thoughts of free trade. Sir John A., with that wonderful feeling he had for the needs of Canadian people, soon taught Alexander Mackenzie what the name of the game was when it came to building up a nation. Unless the government does more about building up the prospects for Canadian employment at the present time, the same thing will happen to them.

In any event, having made those comments, which seem to amount to a plea for unlimited protection, or at least to a plea for sensible protection, the case I have in mind is one where a little less protection is needed and a little more common sense. I hope the minister will listen. He is an insensitive technocrat. He wants to talk to somebody. I will put it on the record and then I will draw it to his attention. This problem arises from the fact that Maritime Canvas Converters could make good use of something called flax cloth, 18 oz. per square yard. I believe that is the technical term used for it. This material serves in the manufacture of ventilator covers, lifeboat covers, hatch covers and so on.

The company loses business in Canada because the Department of Finance has imposed duty on this material, imported from Scotland. As a result, the masters of vessels, and others, who could have these covers made in Halifax, thus providing work for Canadians, choose to go to the United States to get it done. The captains say to Maritime Canvas Converters Limited that they get a 25 per cent subsidy when the work is done in the United States. I am not talking about large potatoes; I am talking about jobs for people—and over the next few months we shall hear a great deal in this Parliament about jobs for Canadians.

We need a few sensible measures in addition to a little more flexibility than we have at present. Perhaps the minister's legislation will provide this. I should complete the story by saying that no Canadian firm makes flax cloth, 18 oz. per square yard. At least, there is none that has been heard of in Halifax. If such a firm exists, its salesmen have not reached that great east coast port. This material is made in Scotland and as far as is known it is not made in Canada. It may be made in the United States. Thus, it is hardly a commodity on which a duty has to be placed in order to protect a Canadian manufacturer.

The people in Maritime Canvas Converters and Upholstery Limited have engaged in correspondence on this subject with the Department of Finance; I refer to a letter written to Mr. J. W. Latimer in that department. What I am suggesting to the minister is this. Since the board has these powers and there are to be changes to