

Government Orders

free trade agreement and the North American free trade agreement in pushing to the end where there is the breakdown at the borders between ourselves and the United States.

It gives the advantage, I would suggest, to the United States manufacturers. It is going to cause a problem to some of our clothing manufacturers in bringing out yarns and fabrics that are made offshore and are presently being used. That is because it is going to force them to purchase more North American made fabrics, often made in Mexico or the United States. It is going to put them at a disadvantage in that respect.

From my point of view and from the point of view of my party there are major problems with this in that it does not do what it should do. If there are to be tariffs brought in it seems that they should be back end loaded to ensure the smooth transition for the textile industry.

Mr. McDermid: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member rightfully pointed out that there has been a reduction in employment in the industry.

As I mentioned in my remarks and as the industry itself has acknowledged, rationalization has had to go on. Modern equipment and far more productive operations have come into play. We have seen some very positive results. We have gone through a recession, there is no question about that. We have lost employment to that and we have lost some employment to rationalization.

One of the things I think we should point out to the Canadian public just to make a balanced presentation to them is that exports of apparels are up some 60 per cent since the free trade agreement came in. The Canadian producers of apparel found markets in the United States during the free trade agreement and have done very well with sales. With these changes and reductions in tariffs, it will make them even more competitive. I just wanted to get that on record.

I understand the hon. member's concern about manufacturing jobs and so on and he is right. There has been a reduction, but there has also been an increased productivity, very impressive by the way, in the industry. At the same time, there have been greater exports to the

United States which during a recessionary period have been very significant.

Mr. Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could be as kind as my colleague opposite with respect to the intervention made by the member of the third party.

I cannot because I am a little bit concerned that the member created the impression they had some major difficulties with a piece of legislation on which his party spoke but once at second reading, while we in the Official Opposition kept the debate going for as long as we could in order to get the maximum intervention by the textile industry. When we went into committee, on both occasions that we were there we did not have any representation by members of the third party. If there has been concern we would like to know exactly what it is.

• (1315)

Over the course of the last couple of years, as both the minister and the member from the third party have indicated, there has been an enormous loss of jobs because the industry has suffered an enormous downsizing. We have lost some of the major Canadian textile manufacturers.

That has been a problem for the Canadian industry as a whole. Because of that loss, in order for us to address issues that are now related more to the Canadian apparel industry, this kind of legislation, as incomplete as it would seem to be, at least addresses the component of that general industry that is still thriving, the apparel industry. If we can make its product more competitive, then we should support it.

I think it is important to understand that what we need to do is to ensure that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am sorry to interrupt. The hon. member for North Island—Powell River on a point of order.

Mr. Skelly (North Island—Powell River): Mr. Speaker, 39 Liberals were missing on the NAFTA vote in here and the Liberals voted with the Conservatives to support the NAFTA bill. This is what is actually destroying the tech—