

Textile and Clothing Board Act

can only work if the agreed restraint levels are effectively enforced. The proposed amendment to the Customs Act will enable the government to assist the exporting countries in fulfilling their commitments.

This should be enough on the main parts of the bill itself. The last part of my remarks concern what is left to be done, what is ahead.

[Translation]

It is apparent, Mr. Speaker, that once this bill is passed, most of the main elements of the textile policy will have been put in place, including the establishment of the Textile and Clothing Board, the amendment of the General Adjustment Assistance Program, the introduction of the adjustment assistance program for workers, of which the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) will be speaking in a few minutes, increased export promotion efforts, and the amendments to the Export and Import Permits Act and the Customs Act required for proper implementation of the new policy.

There are three other elements; first, rationalization of the textile tariff; second, establishment of Development and Productivity Centres; and third better statistics. I will say a few words about each one.

With respect to rationalization of textile tariff, the officials of my department are at present endeavouring to establish—in close consultation with the industry—the extent to which the conditional drawback procedures now available to shirt manufacturers could appropriately be extended to other sectors of the apparel industry. We know what a drawback is: an industrialist pays the required import tariff but gets it back if certain conditions are met. I know that this is of special interest to the hon. member for Gamelin (Mr. Portelance). If a workable solution can be found to this problem, costs to manufacturers of some types of garments could be reduced. In addition to any interim measures that may be taken along these lines, the government will undertake a systematic review of the textile and clothing tariffs. If the findings of this study make it possible to introduce an important change into the customs tariff, Canada will endeavour, on the other hand, to improve its access to export markets, or to obtain corresponding compensations. In plain English, it means that should it be decided to change the tariff, attempts will be made to “sell” these changes in exchange for advantage from other countries. In this connection, I should like to reiterate the government’s readiness to join with other countries in efforts to seek a liberalization of the highly restrictive environment in which the world textile trade takes place at the present time.

Secondly, task forces for the textile and clothing industries consisting of industry and government representatives have been created to develop detailed proposals for the establishment of the Development and Productivity Centres. It is expected that they will submit their recommendations by the middle of this year.

And, finally, the Dominion Bureau of Statistics has indicated that with some refinement in compilation and

[Mr. Pepin.]

reporting procedures it expects to be in the position to provide on a timely basis all the statistics required for the effective administration of the new textile policy.

I have now accounted, Mr. Speaker, for all of the elements of the new textile policy as announced on May 14 last year.

Following my announcement of the new textile policy on May 14, my good friend the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) made a vigorous plea for “a more equitable balance than exists today.”

It is my contention that the new textile policy achieves an “equitable balance.” In fact it may be unique in this respect, both as a textile policy and as a policy developed for a particular industry sector. It takes into account regional and social considerations, producer and consumer interests, our industrial development and trade objectives, as well as our international obligations. I am certain that some will consider it too protectionist, others not protective enough. That in itself is an indication of the careful balance that has been struck.

Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the textile policy succeeds. For the first time, the government defines and presents, I would say, a general framework for every sector of a secondary industry, covering all aspects: imports, exports, production, research, development, promotion, etc. I believe it is the first time such a framework has been offered.

All interested parties asked that it be done. Producers said: What do you want us to do? Exporters were also interested. Unions, consumers, in one word everybody was looking for a clearer philosophy, a more definite structure and that is what we are offering today in Bill C-215.

I repeat, it is very important that the policy succeeds. Therefore, the government needs and expects the co-operation of all sectors of the industry, all interested parties and, particularly today, all members of Parliament, both of the government and opposition parties.

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, first of all, may I express my appreciation to the House for permitting me to speak out of what would be the normal order of speakers so that I may try to clarify, to some extent at least, clause 21 of this particular bill to establish a Textile and Clothing Board. I think the minister sponsoring the bill explained in great detail last night and again today the benefits that could flow from this new policy.

As Minister of Labour I am, of course, concerned with any policy that could cause disruption of any type in the working force of this country. I am not unaware of the particular problems faced by labour-intensive industries such as the textile industry and the need to make them more competitive and efficient so they are able to meet the challenge of other countries which are traditional competitors in the field of textiles. I think it is safe to say that over the next year we will be faced more and more with the question of labour-intensive industries compet-