

Supply

Monday in this House his Party has presented a motion that goes completely the other way. I will be happy to see him get up in the House and vote for this motion today. If they are sincere, for once they can put their money where their mouths are.

● (1630)

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments. The Hon. Member for Calgary East (Mr. Kindy).

Mr. Kindy: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Charest) on his eloquence. I think that he is quite able to defend the interests of the people in the Eastern Townships. He is quite sincere. He also knows that you cannot have commercial relations without some free trade. You cannot live under constant protection.

I would like to ask him one question: Does he believe that it was in the interests of the population in general and the people in the Eastern Townships that we acted as we did in providing certain quotas for women's and girls' footwear?

Mr. Charest: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

I mentioned earlier that I was not entirely satisfied with the decision because there are many textile workers in our region and I would have liked more to be done for them. I say so quite frankly.

I think that the Minister said certain things on which we should concentrate more, including the need to implement retraining programs if there are problems. Second, the Minister and the Government plan to ask importers to be careful about what they will do in the next few months, otherwise I imagine that the issue of quotas might be reassessed.

Based on the success achieved by a similar program for the automobile industry, I think it fair to say that, if we can judge the future by the past, we can hope for a number of things to come out of the notice given to these importing countries by the Government.

Generally, I find the situation difficult, and, to be frank, the people in general and the footwear workers of the Eastern townships were expecting more. However, to be fair, an editorial published today in *La Tribune* of Sherbrooke, the newspaper which serves my own constituency and that of my colleagues for Richmond-Wolfe and Shefford, says the following:

"In deciding to phase out import quotas in the footwear industry, the Federal Government is going in the right direction, but without enough precautions." When the author speaks about precautions, he is referring to the situation of workers and to retraining programs. I believe that today's editorial describes fairly well the concerns of the workers. However, there is one thing that I would like to make clear,

namely that, in the future as in the past, I shall look after them and monitor closely, as it is my duty to do, what is going on in the industry to ensure that the quotas will be applied fairly and equitably in the interests of the men and women employed in the footwear industry.

Mr. Tardif: Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to congratulate the Hon. Member for Sherbrooke on his fine speech. It will allow the Hon. Member both to support his Government and tell his constituents: "I have, indeed, stood up to denounce the decision." That kind of performance, Mr. Speaker, reflects very well this Government, which is quite able to say yes to those who want to hear yes, and no to the others if that is what they want to hear.

I would have just one question to ask to the Hon. Member for Sherbrooke, if I may, Mr. Speaker. The promises made by the Prime Minister were made in Sherbrooke before *La Tribune*.

Will the Hon. Member for Sherbrooke tell this House whether his Government has made any promises to men and women working in the shoe industry?

Mr. Charest: As you very well know, when this statement was made by the then leader of the Opposition, your Government had not yet ordered a report, or requested a decision by the Canadian Import Tribunal. One month later, your Government ordered that report, and the tribunal rendered its decision.

Those are the circumstances surrounding that statement and in all fairness, would the hon. member not recognize that quotas were not abolished in the Sherbrooke area, that 90 per 100 of the production has been maintained? Under those circumstances, the leader of the opposition, now Prime Minister, was right when he made such a statement. He kept his word. And his statement could very well be interpreted that way.

But both the Hon. Member and I wish to be a frank as possible in the course of the present debate. I do recognize that we expected more. But he must view the global picture on that matter and the situation of all our workers as well as those in his riding, at the Brown Shoe Company, which has received many contracts from the federal government to manufacture army boots. That plant was awarded many contracts from the government since September and contracts are more profitable than quotas.

I suggest that workers in this area have been granted a fair deal under the circumstances. We were and we still are interested in granting some measure of justice to that industry as a whole, and particularly in the allocation of quotas. Both the hon. member and I know the problem and want to remind the House as well as the minister that it is not only a matter of having quotas as such but a matter of allocation. That is where the problem arises. Since those quotas have been maintained, I