

*The Budget—Mr. Deschambault*

another inquiry, this time being instructed by the government to submit recommendations as to what could be done for the industry. Again there was a report. Again the report conceded that the industry was in serious trouble but again the board made no recommendation regarding steps that should be taken, this time because the board seemed to think that any steps advocated to give efficient help to our industry would be of such extraordinary nature that they would exceed its jurisdiction.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention the names of a few rubber footwear manufacturers that gave up the fight, feeling completely out of the running with foreign imports.

In 1950, the Gutta Percha Rubber Ltd. was the first to go under. A little later, in 1951, it was the turn of the Cambridge Company. Two or three years after that date, the B. F. Goodrich of Canada Ltd. closed down its rubber shoe plant; then came the Superior Rubber Co. Ltd., a crown corporation set up by the Newfoundland government, which also had to quit in 1956. And quite recently again, Mr. Speaker, it was the turn of the British Rubber Co., of St. Laurent and Lachine, to stop operations and amalgamate with the Miner Rubber Co., of Granby, in order to be better able to stand up to competition.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that a few companies kept operating but at great sacrifice and considerable loss. In particular, they had to dismiss many of their workers, which only increased the unemployment problem. So that you may realize the vastness of the problem, I would like to quote more figures. In 1950, the Canadian rubber industry sold 15 million pairs of canvas shoes and waterproof footwear in Canada. That same year, that is in 1950, we imported 280,000 pairs. In 1959, the import figures showed a total of 8 million pairs, as compared to 280 thousand pairs in 1950.

Of course, during this period sales in the Canadian footwear industry suffered a severe slump. Sales figures decreased from 15 million pairs in 1950 to 10 million pairs in 1959, that is one third of its total sales.

In 1950, imports were negligible but in 1959, imports of canvas shoes captured 70 per cent of the entire Canadian market, while that of rubber footwear accounted for 30 per cent of our market. This figure of 30 per cent represents a rapid gain of 11 per cent for 1958 and 1959 alone.

A major cause of concern is the fact that the breaking point for Canadian manufacturers is precisely between 30 per cent and 45

per cent. In other words our modern plants will no longer be able to meet their obligations unless we act promptly and efficiently on behalf of our manufacturers.

I would not want to deal at length with the textile industry, although that industry too has suffered heavy losses because of imports. The precarious situation of those Canadian plants has often been discussed in this house. However, may I point out that the Regent Knitting Mills Ltd., in my district, in St. Jerome, has been forced to discharge more than one third of its employees.

The hon. member for St. Hyacinthe-Bagot (Mr. Ricard), and the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard) have repeatedly told the house of the difficulties facing Canadian textile plants, especially in the province of Quebec.

I know that the government has taken certain steps to help this type of industry, but I must remind the Minister of Finance that the situation of the textile industry is still very precarious. I have it on good authority that for several years many owners of this type of industries have registered substantial annual deficits.

(Text):

I should like to comment on one of the branches of our industry which is also in need of our help, namely the hardwood plywood industry of Canada, which is faced with a similar problem. Here again I should like to give some figures which will throw some light on the situation and give information to hon. members.

I should like to emphasize the seriousness of the present situation. Statistics on imports and home production supply a clear picture of the imports of foreign plywood. We see that imports of Japanese plywood, which were under one million square feet in 1950, reached 50 million square feet in 1959. We can obtain an even better view of the situation if we realize that imports of hardwood plywood in the United States, which amounted to only 10 million square feet in 1951, had climbed up to 810 million square feet in 1959. I might add that these figures will be higher in 1960 compared with the few months of 1959 for which statistics are available. Such abnormal imports have already forced three plants to close their doors, and consequently have caused a loss of labour affecting many hundreds, if not thousands, of people.