

STATISTICS CANADA

SPECIAL STUDY OF LABOUR FORCE IN ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Mr. Andy Hogan (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the President of the Treasury Board who has announced an inquiry into the credibility of Statistics Canada figures. Is the minister directing the expert involved to make a special study of figures as they relate to the labour force in Atlantic Canada where there is so much underemployment now that is not captured by the so-called official unemployment figures? There is a great number of discouraged workers in that region, and we feel that the Atlantic region's official unemployment figures do not give the true picture.

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (President of Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell the hon. member at this time that such a study is under way, but I shall certainly take his representation into consideration and report back.

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INDUSTRY

SUPPORT OF RETAILERS FOR CANADIAN INDUSTRY

Mr. Hal Herbert (Vaudreuil): Mr. Speaker, my question would normally be directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Minister of State for Economic Development, but in his absence perhaps one of the junior ministers will reply. The Canadian sweater industry, in its brief of December 5, requested the minister of trade and economic development to "advise the major retail stores that Canada needs a viable sweater manufacturing industry and suggest that they purchase at least three-quarters of their needs from Canadian manufacturers."

Does the minister intend to take specific action to ensure that the major retailers will act like good corporate citizens, support Canadian industry and ensure jobs for Canadians in this coming winter?

Hon. Ron Huntington (Minister of State for Small Businesses and Industry): Mr. Speaker, my department received a brief from the Canadian Apparel Manufacturing Association on the subject of sweaters. We have asked the branch responsible within the department to study the matter and report back to the ministers at the earliest opportunity the recommendations they anticipate.

I can advise that of the 11 bilateral agreements that we have with countries from which we import, 10 cover sweaters. I think it is up to consumers and retailers to solve the rest of this problem, except that we do have a Buy Canadian program in place.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

REQUEST SWEATER IMPORTS BE REDUCED

Mr. Arthur Portelance (Gamelin): Mr. Speaker, my question is supplementary to that of the hon. member for Vaudreuil and directed to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce and Economic Development.

Within the next few months, some 2,000 jobs will be lost in the knitted wear and knitted sweater industry if the underdeveloped countries make full use of their import quotas. Would the minister submit this case forthwith to the Textile and Clothing Board for a decision to reduce the number of imported sweaters and distribute these imports over equal periods during the year, as recommended in the brief dated December 5 which the minister mentioned?

Moreover, would it be possible to know when the House of Commons, as well as the textile and clothing industries and their 200,000 employees, will be advised of the findings of the Textile and Clothing Board, following the investigation it is currently carrying out to streamline the recommendations of 1977 which brought about the decision concerning the quotas and the bilateral agreements?

[English]

Hon. Ron Huntington (Minister of State for Small Businesses and Industry): Mr. Speaker, I have met with the officials concerned. They are working on this whole area in order to give immediate advice to the ministers not only concerning sweaters but jeans as well.

A total review of the program is in place. I have had meetings with the responsible official about the reporting system, the permit-issuing system and the information-gathering system so that we can get a total handle on this whole area and so that we can improve the communication medium and the protection needed for Canadian manufacturers, without putting the complete imposition on the Canadian consumer.

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REVENUE CANADA

INVESTIGATION OF WEARING APPAREL IMPORTS FROM HONG KONG—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of National Revenue. The officials of his department undertook, some time ago, an investigation of the valuation of imports of wearing apparel from Hong Kong. Despite the fact that these imports were found to be sold at dumping prices by Customs Canada, no action has been taken by the minister. Could the minister indicate to us today if he is ready to act on this pressing matter?

Hon. Walter Baker (President of the Privy Council and Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for giving me notice of the question. It is not fair to say that no action has been taken by the department. The fact