

Textile and Clothing Board Act

Canadian manufacturers. However, on account of the very great variety of materials, designs, patterns and finishes, let alone the requirements created by marked variations in the climate, the industry cannot easily resort to mass production, which would allow for a still greater decrease in prices.

Consequently, Canadian producers have to face very strong competition on foreign markets, in the United States as well as in Europe and in Asia, where big industries, because of the huge population and of the lower standard of living, or because of both factors, enjoy many economic advantages and corner practically the whole of their domestic markets.

The Canadian market is different. In this country, industry must continually fight, and it has been doing so for many years, to get each dollar of sales. Mass-production and low costs, which are assets to big foreign producers at home, are also a big help to them on our domestic markets.

As a result, Canadian textiles have to face hard competition from imported items. For instance, out of the 800 million-odd yards of cotton, wool and synthetic textile items that the Canadian people consume yearly, the proportion supplied by Canadian factories represents less than 60 per cent.

For several years, manufacturing has been a most desirable activity for Canada by reason of its high productivity and of its marked technological trends. In recent years, the annual value added per worker, in Canada, has been more than \$13,000 compared with approximately \$7,000 for the whole Canadian industry. Several other countries see in it an ideal way to use their resources, so as to create maximum economic growth. The world capacity for manufacturing synthetic goods has increased by more than 60 per cent over the past 10 years and it is anticipated that this growth will accelerate again in the future.

Technological development has been speeding up and showing itself in the improvement of the quality of products, and the rate of appearance of new products on the market is increasingly accelerating. The producer who would choose to offer a product of a quality and type similar to those of two or more years ago, would disappear.

In the area of man-made fibers, as in many other industrial sectors largely dependent upon investment and technology, the average unit production costs decrease in relation to the production volume. Therefore, other factors being equal, the manufacturers whose production is the most important have the lowest unit costs. The bill now before us is specifically designed to protect low production costs industries with a fast turnover.

• (3:50 p.m.)

The volume of production is a function of the volume of demand. So it is logical to say that the production unit cost is a function of demand. Under present conditions, with a small domestic market, it is necessary to take protective measures for the Canadian textile industry.

Since 1952, Canada and other industrialized countries have reached agreements to expand their textile imports

[Mr. Rodrigue.]

from developing countries. For the last 20 years or so, we have assisted these countries in many ways either by extending loans to organize their industry or by allowing them to acquire machinery from us. This is not a reason to put aside our own industry which is now feeling the bite of cheap imports from these countries which we have assisted for some twenty years.

Before concluding my remarks, I wish to stress that the board's main duty will be to supervise and advise the government on the risks that textile and clothing imports present for the various sectors of our industry. I think the bill before us is a reasonable measure for the contracting parties to the agreements reached since 1952 and that it is a desirable step for the Canadian textile industry whose share in the domestic market has been continuously declining for ten years.

I wish other measures of that kind will complete the work already begun by the Textile and Clothing Board that already started to operate four months ago.

Hon. Théogène Ricard (Saint-Hyacinthe): Mr. Speaker, I already had the opportunity on many occasions of expressing my opinion as to the measure before us now and of dealing with the textile and clothing industry, so this afternoon, in order to hasten the passage of that measure, I will make only a few remarks.

Since I was closely associated with the textile industry for many years before becoming a member of Parliament and that many of my fellow citizens are unemployed at the present time, on account of the government's lack of foresight, I avail myself of this opportunity to express once more my dissatisfaction and direct reproaches to the authorities concerned.

But I will not elaborate because I think that the government took long enough to recognize the disastrous situation of the textile industry. In fact, the government is responsible for the loss of markets and jobs. There is no need to recall the past. I would rather share the enthusiasm shown by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) about the results of the Textile and Clothing Board and assure him that we shall not oppose this legislation. Certainly our views may differ but, generally speaking, we shall give the minister all the support we can.

Let us not forget that the current situation of the textile industry is due to imports. The minister himself is convinced of this since he introduced last year specific measures to protect the jobs of certain workers in the shirt industry. But once again, these measures were taken too late and the workers were the most affected.

I hope that the minister, in co-operation with other departments, will do his best so that the workers who have already spent several years in the textile industry will get their jobs back. I dare hope that the minister, who knows this industry very well, since he is from a city where the textile industry is a major activity, will give this problem all the attention it requires. If it is possible to find new jobs for the workers who have devoted most of their life to the textile industry, the minister will have deserved our admiration and our gratitude.