

Surtax on Shirt Imports

and he would have been given the minimum rates set for such cases.

The present administration is no way different from its predecessors. In fact, this way of messing about that is leading the country to stagnation is unfortunately the consequence of our colonial status.

We have always exported our resources and raw materials at ridiculous prices to England or to the United States which promptly process and refine them in order to sell them back to us at high prices.

Today, we are still facing the same problem. To please our mother country, Great Britain, and especially those capitalists who have become manufacturers in Hong Kong and Japan, we have entered into agreements which contribute to fill Canadian warehouses to the point of practically disrupting several sectors of our economy, and the footwear industry is not spared either.

The Association of Shoe Manufacturers which has been trying since 1954 to draw the government's attention to those conditions, pointed out on December 12, 1966, when submitting its fifth brief, that "shoe imports represented 47 per cent of the Canadian production."

Such was the situation in 1966 and the then Minister of Trade and Commerce was not convinced either.

His administration gave proof of it. Indeed he gave us such proof on January 16, 1967, as reported on page 11284 of *Hansard*. At that time I asked the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce the following question:

Is the minister aware of the difficult situation in which the Canadian shoe manufacturers now find themselves due to excessive importation of these products from Asian and communist countries?

If so, will the hon. minister inform the house as to the steps he intends to take in this regard; also, will our representatives in Geneva be advised in time to avoid a catastrophe in this industry?

The hon. Robert Winters, the then Minister of Trade and Commerce gave me the following answer:

—this matter has been brought to my attention before and it is under consideration. It is a fact that imports of shoes have increased, but domestic production has substantially increased too.

Today it is the same. Last spring, the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), made an eloquent speech in the House and referred to DBS figures. These showed that from 1956 to 1969, when the Canadian population increased by 33 per cent shoe manufacturing decreased by 1 per cent. In the same period, there was a 568 per cent increase in shoe imports.

As a result plants closed down and thousands of workers were laid off in Canada. At the same time, employment rose from 90,000 to 107,000 in Italy, a country from which we import.

After examining the Association's last brief, the one released last spring, I asked the minister the following question as recorded on page 8338 of the Official report of the House of Commons Debates of June 19, 1970:

In view of the fact that shoe imports which have been tolerated to date place our Canadian manufacturers on the brink of bankruptcy, can the minister tell us if he intends to recommend that the customs tariff be amended with a view to correcting the situation.

[Mr. Godin.]

The hon. minister answered:

Mr. Speaker, I am at the present time reading the brief submitted by the Shoe Manufacturers Association of Canada. This document contains certain questionable statistics.

The minister has doubts about figures supplied by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. If this is not somewhat dishonest, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what is.

In front of such criminal carelessness, unemployed people, manufacturers, in short the general public have come to the point where they question the honesty of the minister. If he intends to make up for that, I think it is high time for him to take action.

If at one time he held the position of Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, it is because someone in Parliament believed he had a little energy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but I must remind him that he may not in the House make any insinuations concerning the integrity of a minister or of an individual member.

Therefore, I would ask him to continue his remarks and refrain from making insinuations towards an hon. member or attacking his integrity.

Mr. Godin: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall comply with the rules.

It is on account of some ministers that there is so much inertia in Parliament.

There are unemployed people in all constituencies because somebody does not assume his responsibilities, thanks to the protection afforded under the Standing Order.

At any rate, I say in conclusion that the time of disappointment has been long enough for us and, as our good friends of Quebec said in 1960: it is time for a change.

I can assure the House that I approve the motion proposed by the hon. member for Beauce (Mr. Rodrigue) in order to obtain a better control over imports.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Howard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few remarks in connection with the subject before us to answer some of the very good points raised by members on both sides of the House and thank them for their contributions to the debate today.

We have had a number of interesting comments but I should like to correct some misimpressions as I go along. I should like to refer to the comments by the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Anderson) and suggest to him that perhaps, in the spirit of western freedom, there is some room to consider workers all over Canada who are unduly penalized by changes in our trading patterns. I should like to remind him that those who have suffered from the changes that have taken place in our textile industry are not confined to any one province of Canada but are spread all across the country, including our own province of British Columbia.