

*Oral Questions***INDUSTRY****REPORTED DIFFICULTIES IN SHOE INDUSTRY—GOVERNMENT ACTION TO RESOLVE**

Mr. John A. Fraser (Vancouver South): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. A week ago a Vancouver newspaper warned as follows:

Grim warnings of zooming shoe prices, the virtual disappearance of low-priced imports, supply shortages and retail bankruptcies are rumbling through the B.C. shoe industry.

As the minister knows, this is imputed to be a direct result of the import quotas last month. Has the minister been in touch with people in the shoe industry in Vancouver? Can he tell the House whether these very dire warnings are exaggerated, whether his department is considering the situation, and whether it might mean some changes in the import quotas that have been put in place?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that those dire warnings are exaggerated. What we are attempting to do is limit an importer to the average importation of the 1974-75 year. There were no dire shortages in those years, and there will probably not be any dire shortages in 1978 and 1979.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, an official at Eaton's in Vancouver was asked about this and he pointed out—and I again quote from the article:

—the estimated cutback of 11 million imported shoes would mean domestic producers must increase their output by 50 per cent to make up the shortfall.

He went on to say that he discussed this matter with manufacturers in Canada and there is no possible way it can be done. Is the minister aware of this situation? Can he advise whether the figures quoted in the article are correct? If they are, we are in a serious shortfall position as far as the supply of shoes is concerned.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I have not seen the article and I cannot confirm the figure. In 1976, the Canadian shoe manufacturing industry had about 56 per cent of the Canadian market. In the first eight months of 1977, the share of the Canadian market to the Canadian shoe industry dropped to about 41 per cent. We are trying to bring it up to at least 50 per cent or 56 per cent of what it was in 1974 and 1975.

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TRADE**REQUEST GOVERNMENT RECONSIDER INCREASING IMPORTS OF BEEF**

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. It is with regard to a possible strike, or boycott, by some meat producers in the prairies toward the end of February. I am sure the minister knows that the high level of imports and low prices are the cause of a lot of unrest on the prairies. Will he

[Mr. Andras.]

reconsider the decision to increase imports by two million pounds in 1978, and set import controls that will progressively increase the Canadian producers' share of our domestic market?

Hon. Jack H. Horner (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, Canadian producers have about 93 per cent or 94 per cent of the Canadian market. We exported more beef last year than we imported. If one totals up live and dressed beef, the two million pound increase to Australia and New Zealand is an increase of 1.5 per cent to those countries. That corresponds with the increase in growth of the population in Canada. That, to me, is a very small increase.

Mr. Nystrom: Since some cattle prices in this country are between 20 per cent and 30 per cent below the cost of production, will the minister now introduce the bill promised by the Minister of Agriculture last fall, in Saskatchewan, namely, a meat trade authority to monitor and control imports of beef and to monitor the whole beef industry in this country?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I suppose all kinds of bills could be introduced into parliament. Whether they would be passed is another matter. However, I want to assure the hon. member and the House that the importation of beef is being very closely monitored by my department. It is certainly in reliable hands.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nystrom: With respect, the minister did not answer my question. I asked whether it is the intention of the government to introduce this bill, because the Minister of Agriculture promised last fall that if the beef industry was in trouble we would get such a bill. Is it the intention of the government to introduce it?

Mr. Horner: As I have already answered, Mr. Speaker, the beef industry is being monitored very closely by my department with regard to the question of imports and exports. We will continue to do that.

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THE MINISTRY**PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF CABINET BEFORE APPOINTMENT**

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister. Last night on "The Watson Report", the Solicitor General was asked if he had been asked by the Prime Minister whether there might be any matters which might lead him, the Solicitor General, not to be able to carry out his responsibilities. He was asked whether that question had been asked by the Prime Minister prior to his appointment as Solicitor General. As I understand it, the Solicitor General said he would not answer that question.

Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether he, personally, as head of government, asked the present Solicitor Gener-